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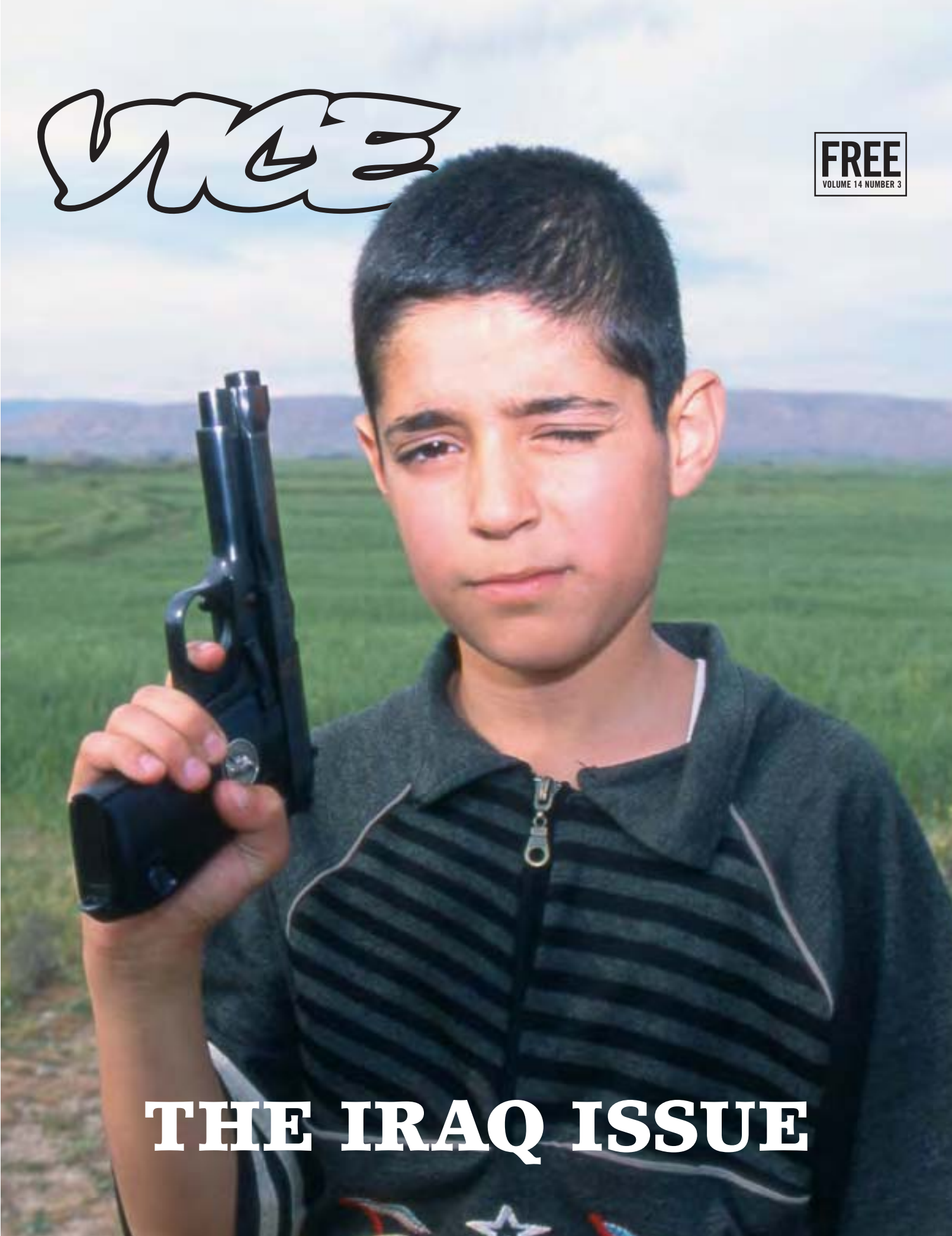


THE IRAQ ISSUE

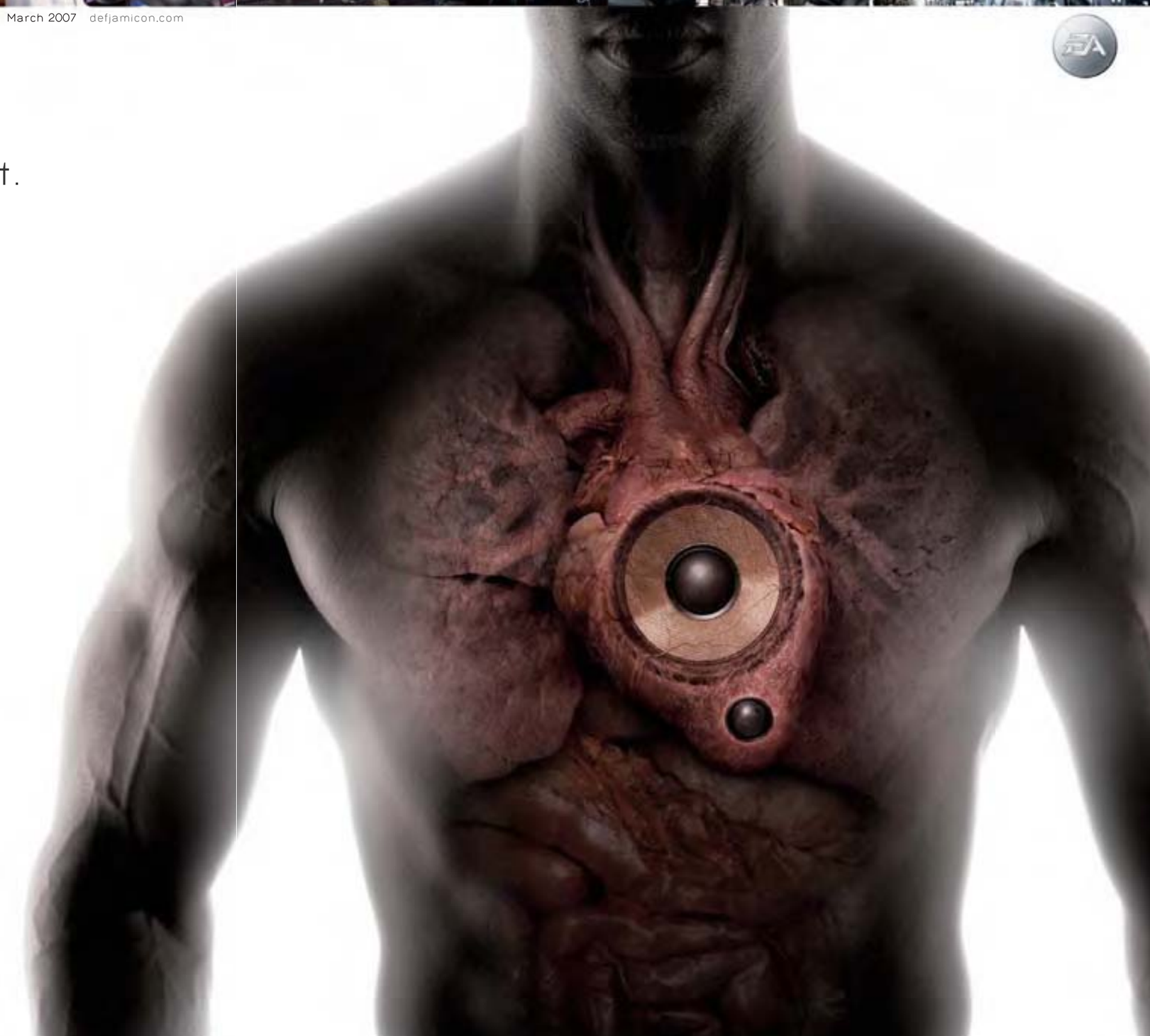
20+ Hip-Hop Artists 9 Interactive Destructible Venues 6 Different Fighting Styles 1 Place at the Top March 2007 defjamicon.com

From the heart. To the beat.

To the fist. To the face.

I have no fear.
I fight to the beat.
The music is my weapon.
My fist to your face.
I control my own destiny.
I will not be stopped.
From the street corner
to the corner office.
I fight to become an Icon.

ICON



MATURE 17+
Blood
Strong Lyrics
Violence

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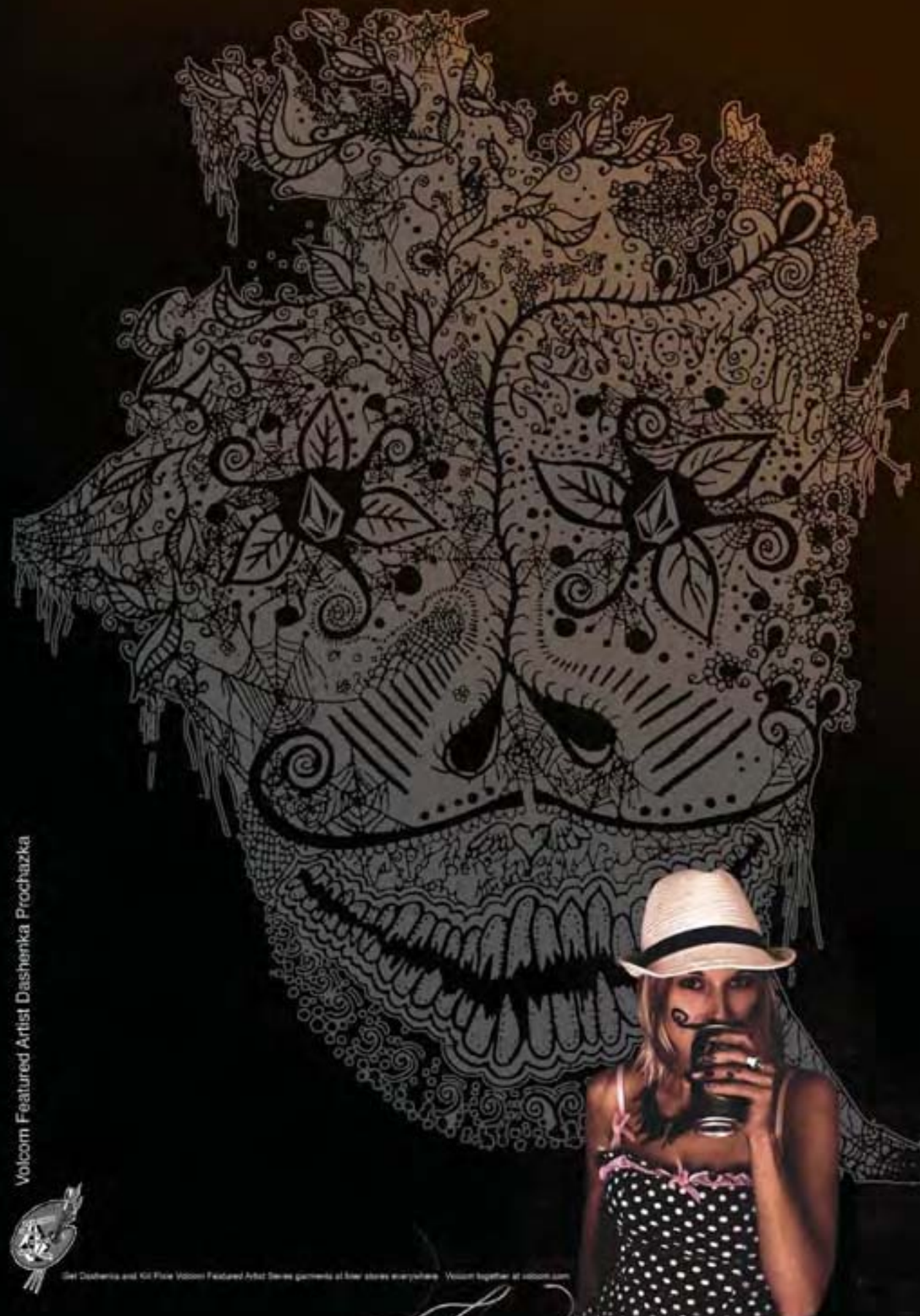

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This Iraqi girl was killed during a mass panic that engulfed thousands of Shiites marching in a religious procession across a bridge from Adhamiya toward Kadhimiya after rumors spread that a suicide bomber was about to attack. The stampede killed more than 600 people. Photo from the book Iraq *by Christoph Bangert, which is being published by powerHouse Books in fall 2007.*

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Cover photo by Yobert Younan

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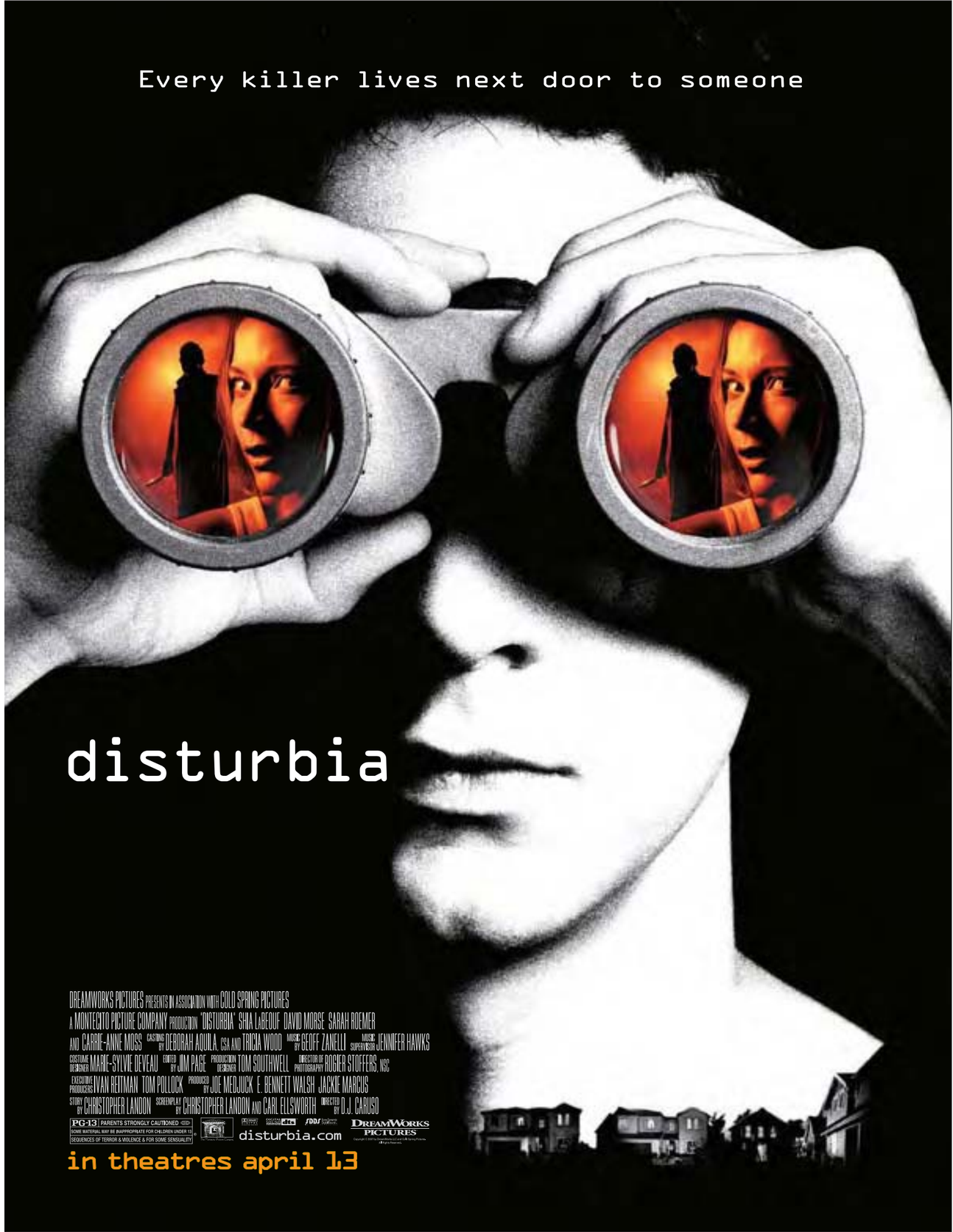
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Sandstorms like this can occur at any time with basically no warning, but they're most common in the early summer. This is when the shamals*, strong persistent winds that can last from days to weeks at a time, blow in from Turkey. Because Iraq's sand is much finer and dustier than the rest of the Middle East's, it manages to get through even the most carefully sealed windows and deposit itself in inch-thick layers inside houses. Fun fact: The early Babylonians attributed sandstorms to the evil Zu bird who gradually evolved into the demon dog-bird Pazuzu—the same demon dog-bird who possessed Regan MacNeil in* The Exorcist*. How do you like them apples? Photo from the book* Iraq *by Christoph Bangert, which is being published by powerHouse Books in fall 2007.*

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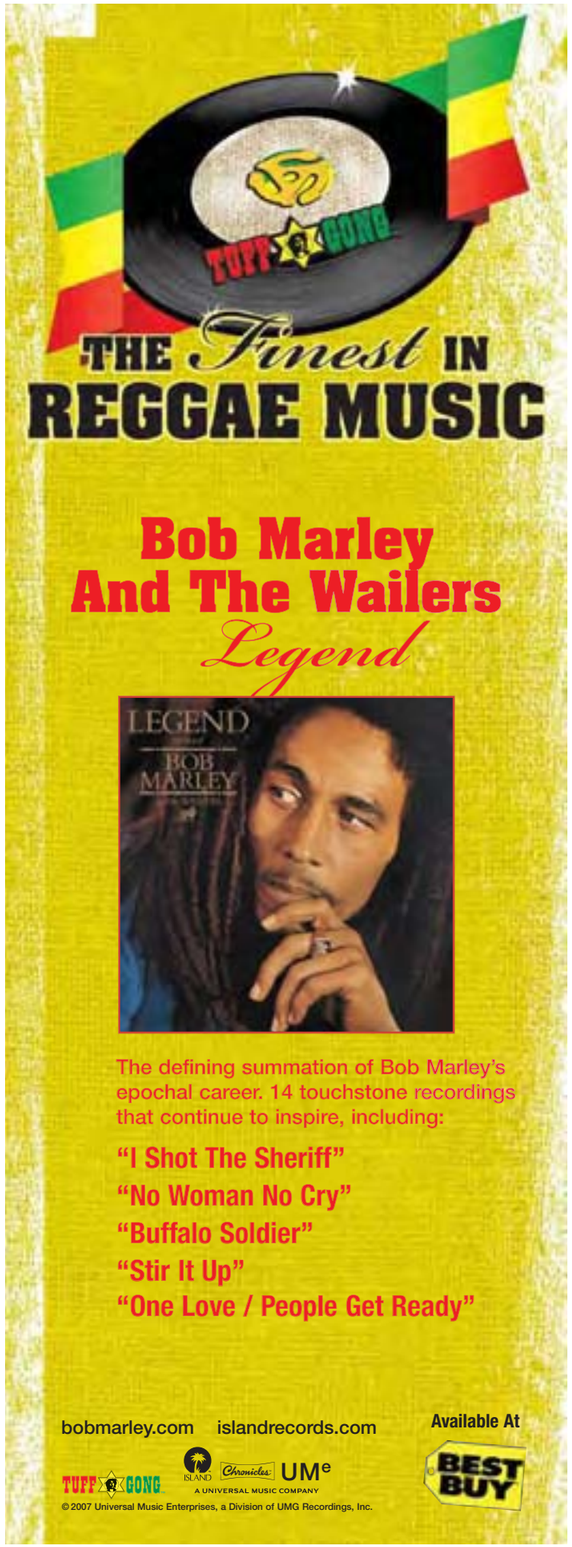

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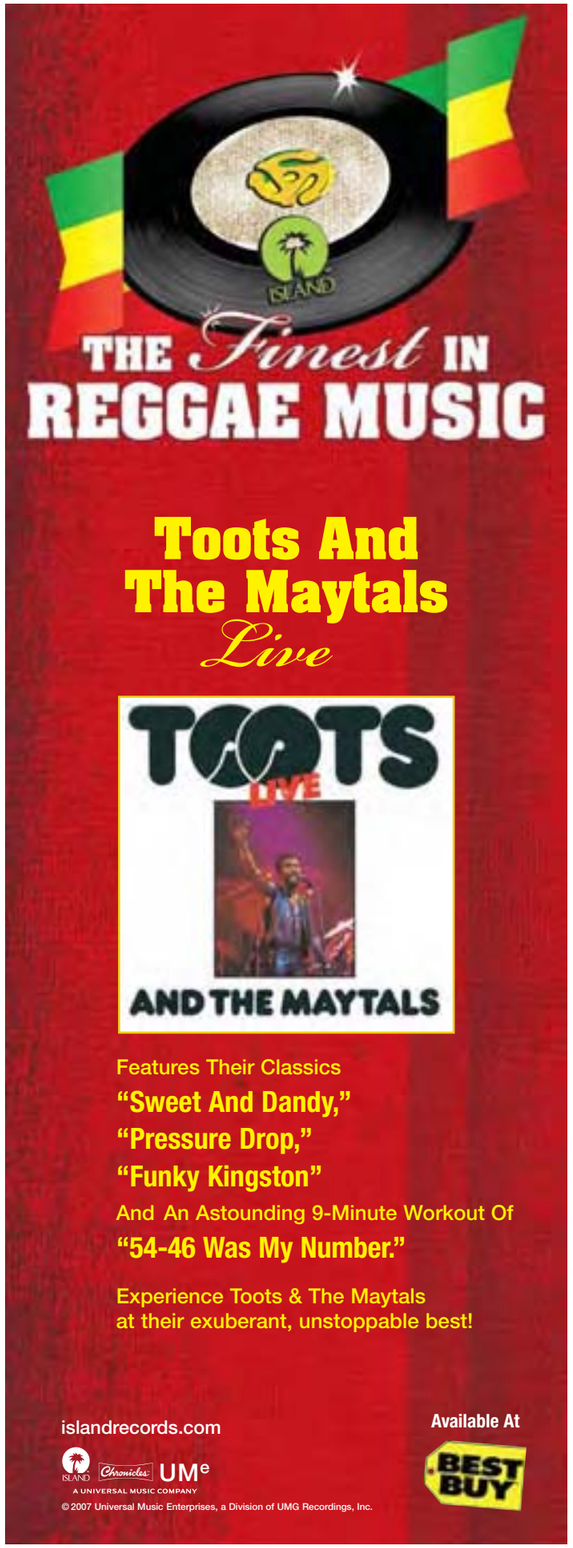

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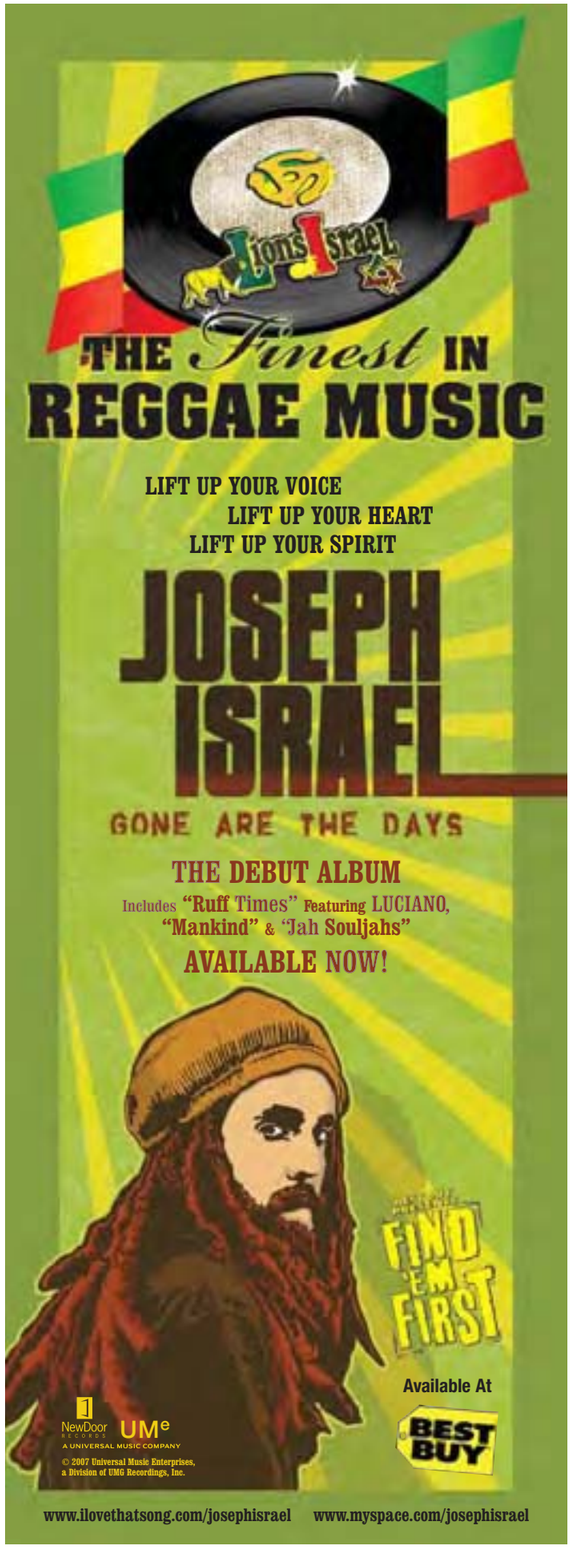

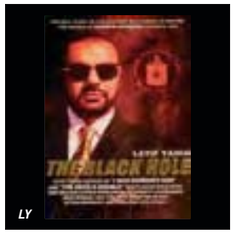

DR. LATIF YAHIA Dr. Yahia's story wins the award for "Craziest Story You Ever Heard in Your Life Ever, Period." In a nutshell, he was forced to be Saddam Hussein's son's body double and spent four years catching bullets for the guy (literally—he's got 11 scars as souvenirs). He eventually escaped to Ireland, where his shocker of an autobiography has just been released. His book is excerpted in this issue, but you should really buy the whole thing. It's called *The Black Hole* and it's available through Arcanum Publishing's website, www.arcanum-publishing.com.

See I WAS UDAY HUSSEIN, *page 102*

SHAGGY We can't show you Shaggy's face, because if we did he'd have about three different militias beating down his door with knives and blindfolds for cavorting with us Westerners. Despite having spent the past four years in school in the living hell that is Baghdad, Shaggy is one of the most laid-back, slackerly people any of us has ever encountered. Like, almost eerily so. We sent him a little note to make sure he didn't get blown up in that huge car-bomb explosion back in January and here's what he wrote back: "I'm hoping things get bad enough during the next couple of weeks to delay my midyear exams because I haven't been bothered to study yet." For this issue, we had him weigh in on some quintessential pieces of Americana.

See TIDBITS, *page 34*

RAGHDA ZAID 16-year-old Raghda does a blog called Baghdad Girl. It's all about her life and her love of cats, and it's a treasure trove of adorable kitten pictures. Basically it's the Iraqi version of the website Cute Overload, except it makes you burst into tears after five minutes of reading it. If you have any especially cute pictures of cats, you should email them to her. We're sure she'd love it. Bee-tee-dubs, Raghda's been blogging since 2004, which is even longer than Epicly Later'd's been around. Just saying.

See BAGHDAD KITTY, *page 40*

HAYDER DAFFAR Hayder is a journalist and filmmaker. He is the director of the Iraq Eye Group, an Iraqi film collective that was recently awarded a grant from the Soros Foundation. He completed his first feature documentary, *The Dreams of Sparrows*, in 2005, and traveled the world to screen it. He started out as a fixer for foreign journalists working in Baghdad while working night shifts as a cashier at a luxury hotel. Since then he's been kidnapped, arrested, chased with guns, mildly tortured, and has narrowly avoided being blown to pieces on three occasions.

See GOAL! *and* FARAHKCHI PRIDE, *pages 52 and 60*

Afrobots; winner of the Boxfresh "freshest kid" contest is currently working on his solo album. With his stylish blend of tropical bossa, dub and electrofunk his debut album will feature the likes of DJ Lethal, Timmy Anderson and Josh Abraham. For more info visit: www.myspace.com/afrobots

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SISTER, SISTER

Dear *Vice*,

I have just finished reading the Appalachia Issue of *Vice*, and I found it most interesting. Having worked in West Virginia (the only state wholly in Appalachia) for 25 years, I read everything I can get my hands on about the area.

Your before-and-after pictures of mountaintop removal were searing. We will keep them to use with groups of student volunteers who come to the area. It isn't easy, without a plane, to get a real idea of the devastation caused by MTR—even aside from things like the sludge flood.

I liked the first-person articles about Homer Thompson (I know a lot of men with stories like his) and Roger Maynard and the women, whose names I forget.

I found the parts about Father Beiting, who is incidentally my pastor, quite good. He isn't totally a Sisyphus. Some of the smaller stones have stayed up there. But you are right: He keeps on trying to move the mass of poverty here. As Camus says though, Sisyphus was a happy man. Father B. is doing what he believes God has called him to do. He isn't defeating poverty in Appalachia, but he is throwing one starfish back in the ocean at a time, and it makes a difference to that one. Sometimes, when he can get some jobs going, he throws a whole bucket in at once.

I could have done without that awful Sacred Heart statue. If you had come across *our* bridge (between Warfield and Kermit), I could have shown you a better SH statue, in front of a Free Will Baptist church, with the too-Catholic heart chiseled neatly out. Amazingly, a number of the little roadside cemeteries have statues of Mary. Maybe she is just a mother figure to some.

I really enjoyed the magazine, though I could wish that you had given some time to those who have made it up into the middle class. There are a number—I employ five. You focused almost entirely on the super-poor and then talked with judges and bankers, who don't generally like that picture of Appalachia. I suspect there are some pathetically poor street people, etc. in NY and those who won't even look at them as they pass them by and who wish they would disappear.

Instead of that wild party in Ft. Gay, with its drunks dancing on tables and its exhibitionist earning a few dollars by exhibiting for the New Yorkers, you might just as accurately have visited some of the revivals or church meetings that play a prominent part down here in Baptist/fundamentalist country. They are interesting gatherings. But then, that would hardly have fit under your magazine title. Many down here see one beer bottle as sinful. We minority Catholics fall somewhere between the two groups, holding, as we do, that nothing God created is sinful—only its misuse.

Finally, that word "fuck." It used to have a real meaning, representing a biological act. Now it's just a totally common overused adjective (or adverb or noun—or expletive?) and it reflects a deprived vocabulary. I used to tell my students who were reading *Catcher in the Rye* that if they found themselves talking like Holden when they finished, they weren't really mature enough to read the book. There are better words—more meaningful words—for at least 95 percent of your "fucks."

Best wishes to all at *Vice*. How did a generally good magazine like yours get such a name? Does it mislead many of your readers (who expect something far raunchier)? Or put off others, who would really find most of your content quite good?

SISTER M. BRENDAN CONLON, DIRECTOR,
CHRISTIAN HELP, INC.
Kermit, WV

We wish we could have found you when we were down there, Sister Conlon. You've opened up a whole new magazine's-worth of questions and issues in your letter. Suffice it to say that we could always have found more things to report on in Appalachia, because it's an endlessly fascinating place.

As for the plethora of "fucks" in the issue, we'll say 20 Hail Marys and 20 Our Fathers. Cool?

CANCER CONQUEROR

Konichi-wa *Vice*,

Let me start off by saying how much I love and enjoy *Vice* magazine! I find myself anticipating the arrival of the magazine every month in the mail. My eagerness is comparable to an ugly woman's eagerness to get laid and/or lose her virginity!

Back to a more serious note, the reason for this letter runs deeper than expressing my admiration to you. Last year, I was diagnosed with cancer (specifically synovial sarcoma) just a few months after my 25th birthday. I wasn't devastated but found myself more motivated to be optimistic and determined to "fight the battle." Despite the hardships of going through chemo (i.e., losing all my hair and becoming an antisocial hermit because I could die from catching a cold from someone) and radiation treatments, I'm proud to say that life hasn't been too bad. Just before Christmas, I underwent eight hours in the operating room to remove the tumor. I must say that having a big-ass scar almost the whole length of my left leg beats not having a leg at all. Now, I'll have the option of telling people I am a survivor of cancer or a freak shark-attack victim.

Thank you *Vice* for accompanying me on this journey. The witty and interesting articles made time breeze by at lightning speed at the hospital and at home while nauseated from chemo and being bedridden for two weeks after the surgery. Perhaps you can dedicate an issue to cancer because it can happen to anyone at any age. It's an issue that's sensitive but also very important to address. I will be forever loyal to your publication.

Living proof,
KITTY
Toronto, ON

There isn't really much that we feel qualified or entitled to say in response to this besides that it makes us happy, and "congratulations" and "thanks."

OUT OF OUR LEAGUE

Dear *Vice*,

I am a fat, lonely loser with no friends. I need some advice on how to meet people who share my tastes. As a person who suffers from bipolar disorder, I crave the extremities of life. I am ruining my body with alcohol and drugs, just so that I can feel some semblance of acceptance and love. I really appreciate the magazine and take all of your endorsements and advice to heart. I wish that I could be one-tenth as great as the people you interview. I feel that my life has completely stopped at the age of 23 and feel very little reason to go on. I want to live life to its fullest but feel too repressed and reserved to live out my fantasies. What can I do to live some sort of a meaningful existence? I do not want to be famous or popular, I just want to have as much fun as I possibly can. If you could please dispense any advice that I could possibly use to turn my life around, I would deeply appreciate it.

As a side note, I recently experienced a major psychotic breakdown, which prevented me from leaving my apartment for months. The only event that I attended during the aforementioned period was the *Vice* Intonation Festival because I trusted the magazine and anyone who appreciates the magazine to a great extent. I have started attending bars and shows again but often find myself sitting alone in a drunken delirium, too afraid to approach people. I love art, music, fun, etc. more than I can express and want to find others who share in these interests.

ANDREW SLIVKA
Via email

Andrew, we're really glad that you had fun at the Intonation Fest. But, um… We don't know what to tell you about the whole bipolar/psychotic episode thing. Our advice would be: Go to a really good shrink, really fast. Or just do like the more mentally ill of us here did and self-medicate with whiskey and heroin until you can't take it anymore, THEN go to a really good shrink (if you don't die first, which you have a strong chance of doing). So just go to the shrink.

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CHANGE OF HEART

Dear *Vice*,

I get jokes. I can laugh at myself. I loved your Girls Issue, spunky yet informed. I smiled and laughed and nodded appreciatively, but all of that stopped when I reached "Johnny Ryan's Page." What a disservice to your fine publication... So unfunny, and not just because it wasn't actually funny (lesbian breast cancer? what does that even mean?), but because it was offensive—I'd go so far as to say misogynistic, and that's not a word I take lightly. Shame on its author and shame on the editor who included it.

NICOLE MORGAN
Toronto, ON

Johnny Ryan replies:

Nicole,

When I wrote these jokes I was going through a really terrible divorce with my second wife. She took everything. I was dead broke. She turned my children and friends against me and I became a huge drug addict. It was during this time that *Vice* contacted me about doing this comic page about girls. They took advantage of me when I wasn't in my right mind. You'll be happy to know that since then I've gone to counseling and things are looking better. I've completely quit drawing stupid, mean-spirited comics and have started a new life coaching volleyball for Katrina orphans in New Orleans. I'm taking it one day at a time, trying to turn myself into a better person.

Best,
Johnny

FORGETTING THE NATIVES

Dear *Vice*,

A couple of things about the Girls Issue: It's weird to me that the whole boob job discussion was based totally on what a guy would think of plastic surgery. If the guy you're with doesn't like your boobs the way they are, that's too bad for him, right? If you were getting your boobs fixed it would be so that you thought they were the finest titties on earth. I think that's the only reason to get your boobs done or not done, as the case may be. And I hate to be the one to say it, because I wish that lady who told you all the expensive cosmetics were shit was right, but that Crème de la Mer face cream is life changing—stupid and sad but true.

One other thing I was wondering about... How come you guys went all over the world to check out insane social/political situations for the *Vice Guide to Travel* when all you had to do was drive to the Black Hills, for instance, and tell the story of any one of the nations who fought there? Who are still fighting there and on every reserve across North America. If you read *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* you'll wish a million dirty bombs dropped all over North America.

People need to know about it. I'd love it if you'd tell them.

Yours,
VIRGINIA
Penticton, BC

Clean the crust out of your eyes and look at the back issues on viceland.com. We went and lived on a Blackfeet reservation in Montana and did a whole issue with them.

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TIDBITS WHAT DOES IRAQ THINK OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE THINGS?

This month's Tidbits guest-written by our Iraqi friend Shaggy. Check out his blog at baghdadbacon.blogspot.com

iPHONE

These will only be available in the States. We can't get them here. Iraqis do love their mobiles though. They spend crazy money on them and over here the prices aren't subsidized. I have a Sony Ericsson phone. Reception is good but employees are often killed for no reason. People just shoot people here for no reason. There's crazy security.

PUPPIES

There aren't pet stores but there's a pet market. There's a market for everything. Ninety-nine percent of the people that get dogs get them for protection and then treat them like shit. They're not really pets. If you keep a dog in your house you're nasty.

BOOKS

We don't have many bookstores, but there's a book market. However, Western DVDs have been burnt at the DVD market for being indecent. (The market itself didn't get destroyed and was back in business the next day.)

STILETTOS

In Baghdad, women have started wearing head scarves to cover their hair and as you go out into the countryside you even start seeing women wearing burkas. But the extremists don't seem to care about shoes. All the girls at college wear high heels.

ONE HIT

Before the war my brother and I would smoke weed at the public pool. We never got caught because the authorities had no idea what weed is. They don't recognize the smell. You could hand it to them and they'd have no idea. You get the death penalty for doing drugs. This has always been the case.

SIX-PACK OF BUD

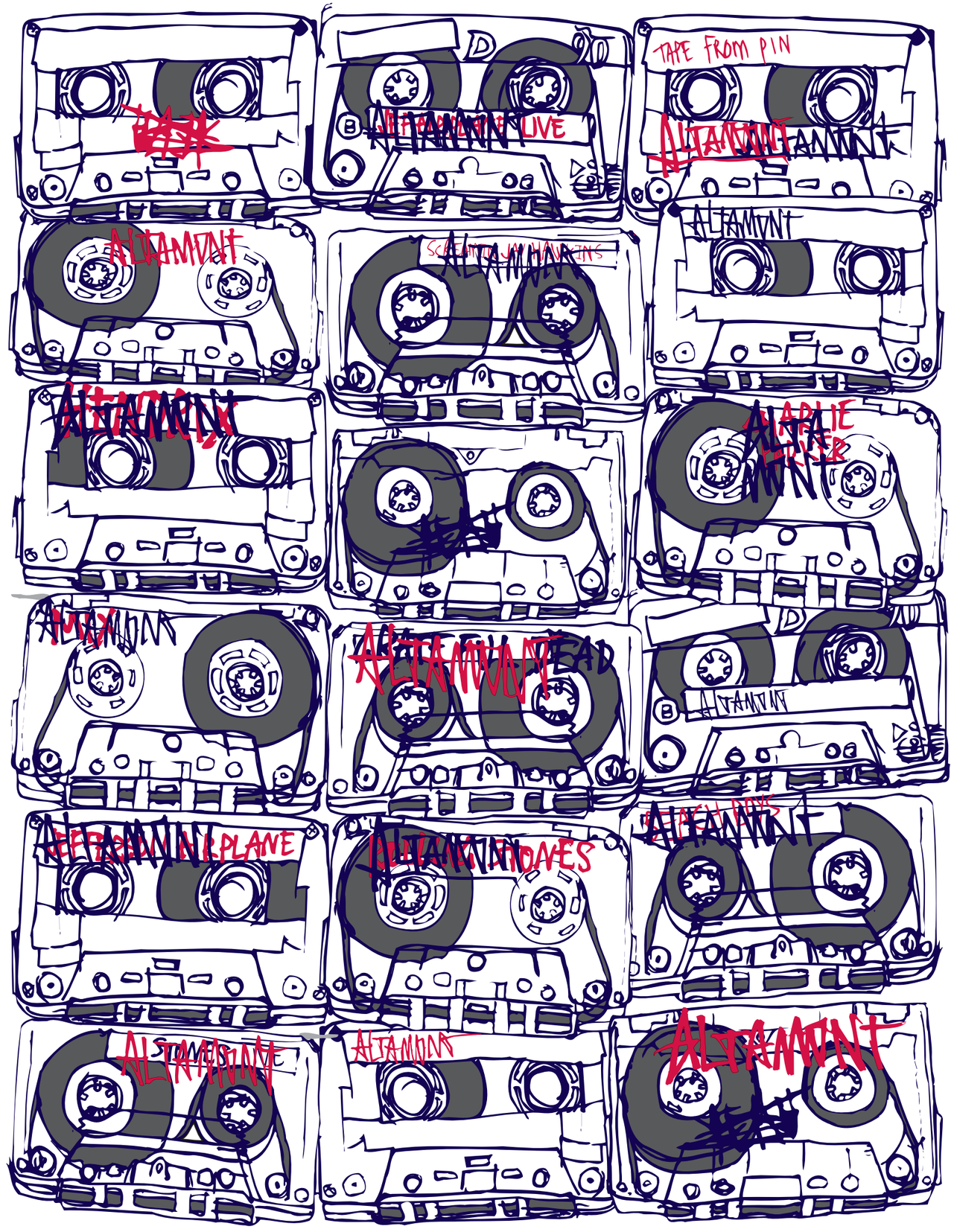
Right after the invasion or the liberation or whatever (in Iraq we call those first days "the war") there was beer available everywhere. Then the extremists started killing the vendors. Now you can only buy beer in one place, next to the green zone.

TOBY KEITH

"Justice will be served and the battle will rage/This old dog gets mad when you rattle his cage/You'll be sorry that you messed with the US of A/We'll put a boot in your ass it's the American way." We had nothing to do with 9/11 did we? This is a very narrow view of the world. Geez. However, there are people here that believe that they have to fight an occupation.

TANNING CREAM

We have this but it's the opposite. The TV will advertise whitening cream where, over the course of a week, an Arabic woman will get happier and more confident as she gets whiter.



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TIDBITS
WHAT DOES IRAQ THINK OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE THINGS?

APPLE PIE

I had apple pie in England once. You don't see any apple pie here. Yesterday I was told a local shopkeeper who was selling cakes and stuff was shot and killed. Again, it was just killing for killing's sake.

BLOW JOB MACHINE

There are no sex shops in Iraq but my father told me that prostitution was legal back in the 40s and 50s. Women could drive back then too. Our country is moving backward.

PORN

Before the war people would smuggle in VHS tapes of porn and we would dub them and show them to friends. Then the internet came along and DVDs. Nobody ever had magazines. The extremist guys would kill you if they caught you with pornography.

PARTYMOBILES

The Iraqi army has Hummers now. I think they just got them from the Egyptian government. They're crap vehicles though. Nobody wealthy would drive one around here because people are scared to show their wealth. Up in the Kurdish region it's a different story.

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THIS PAGE:
- MEDICAL HELL
- IRAQ SPEAK

IRAQ

"There are piles and piles of cadavers there because there is no other place to put them—you can smell the bodies rotting from far away."

Photo from the book Iraq *by Christoph Bangert (powerHouse, fall 2007).*

Doctor Doom — Iraq's Health Care Is Blown Apart

Thirty years ago, Iraq's health care system was one of the most stellar in the Middle East. It was devastated by repeated conflicts and 13 years of embargo, and the invasion destroyed anything that was left.

During Saddam's era we didn't have sufficient medical supplies because of sanctions imposed by the UN. We don't understand why there is still a shortage of supplies now that the sanctions are over.

Our senior doctors are either underground or have moved to Syria, Jordan, or other Gulf countries. We have to improvise appropriate remedies despite a continuous shortage of medicine. On many occasions, doctors have to fight different infections with a single type of antibiotic. Other drugs are also limited—many surgeries and other procedures are done with minimal or no anesthesia. It's like the Middle Ages. In many instances we need a specific type of medication that is not available. Relatives of the patient sometimes bring it from an outside pharmacy with a high, high price.

The most severely injured patient I've ever treated was a 45-year-old man who attempted to move a dead body that was near his residence in the al-Saidiya district of Baghdad. Moving the corpse set off a bomb hidden underneath it. Both of his arms were blown off and half of his skull was gone, exposing brain tissue. His face was totally mutilated and both eyes were ruptured. The man's family brought him in around 10 AM. Even though our hospital wasn't the closest, they came because the road to a closer facility was blocked by the American military. We did what we could, but it was impossible to save his life. He was taken to the Baghdad morgue. There are piles and piles of cadavers there because there is no other place to put them—you can smell the bodies rotting from far away.

Deteriorating health care in Iraq is part of a general collapse of security and social reality. With the increasing departure of Iraqi doctors, it is only getting worse.
DR. HUSSEIN AHMED

HALAW HABIBI! Talk Like an Iraqi

BASICS

HALAW: "Hello" and "good-bye" (Iraqis use the same word for greeting and departing, like Hawaiians!)
SHLONEK: "How are you?" (Said to a man.)
SHLONICH: "How are you?" (Said to a woman.)
SHAKOO MAKOO: "Wassup?" (Literally, "What is there, what isn't there?")
KHOSH: "Good"
EEE: "Yes"
LA: "No"
ENI/YOONI: "My eye/eyes" (A common Iraqi term of endearment that can punctuate a sentence kind of like "darling.")
MOO: "Isn't it?"
KAFI 'AAD: "Enough already"
SHINOO: "What?"
WEIN: "Where?"
SHWAKIT: "When?"
SHLON: "How?"
LEISH: "Why?'
AREED: "I want"
MAREED: "I don't want"
KLAOOTCHI: "Smartass!"
'AMA: "Blindness!" (To wish blindness on someone or on oneself—used when someone does something retarded.)
FAZZAZITNEE: "You scared me!" (Said to a man.)
FAZZAZTEENI: "You scared me!" (Said to a woman.)
FAZZAZTOONI: "You scared me!" (Said to more than one person.)
FAZZEIT: "I got shook!" (To be caught off guard or shocked by something sudden, like an IED, for example.)

INSULTS

ADAB SIZ: Literally, "without morals" (Originally a Turkish term used by Iraqis to describe a person or a bunch of people who behave in an uncivilized way. Widely used to describe Westerners and Americans. The plural is *adab siziyya*.)
KHARAB 'ARTHAK: "Shit on your honor!" (Said to a man.)
KHARAB 'ARTHICH: "Shit on your honor!" (Said to a woman.)
YIL'AN ABOOK LABUL KHALLAFAK: "Curse your father and the father of the one who bore you!"

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THIS PAGE:
- REFUGEE SEX WORKERS
- IRAQI CATSPOTTING

"Iraqi men like the French way. From behind... Or in the ass. A lot of people like that."

War or Whore? — Some Girls Have to Choose

Athari is a 19-year-old Iraqi prostitute who has fled to Syria. Her pimp let us take her picture and interview her for $50, but asked that we not delve into her personal life too much, saying only that it wasn't polite. Maybe it's like that old thing where johns always want to get their hookers to open up emotionally because it's an added violation. We're not sure. We're speculating. Here's the interview.

Vice: What do you want to do when you get out of here?
Athari: I want to travel around the world. I'd like to visit London, and this city… It's a very big one. What's it called?

Which one do you mean?
It's this one I saw in the movies, with a big statue. Liberty Statue?

Oh! New York City.
Yeah, New York.

What kind of men do you like?
Smart ones who respect me a lot.

What is your dream?
My dream is to be a very famous actor. Really, I'd really like to be an actor, so much.

Do you miss Iraq?
Yes sure. It's my home, but go back now? No way.

If you had a lot of money what is the first thing you would do?

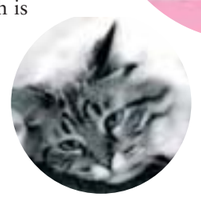
I would buy a lot of clothes. A whole different style. Then I'd buy a car. Then I don't know.

What is the most popular sex position Iraqi men like?
They like the French way.

What's that?
From behind… Or in the ass. A lot of people like that.

VICE STAFF

Baghdad Kitty — The Best Cat Blog in Iraq



I was born in Baghdad in 1991. I lived there for 14 years until I moved to the UAE in 2006. I love cats very much—so much that I have a blog where I post my favorite cat pictures. These are my three all-time favorites. The first photo has a lot of pink, which is my favorite color. The second photo is the one I like most—the blue eyes make it the best photo ever. The third photo I like because those two cats are friends and they remind me of my own friends who I like very much.
RAGHDA ZAID
baghdadgirl.blogspot.com

Talk Like an Iraqi

INSULTS (continued)

YIL'AN ABOOCH LABUL KHALLAFICH: Same as before, but to a woman.
IBN IL KELB: "Son of a dog!"
IBN IL QUNDARA: "Son of a shoe!"
IBN IL ZAFRA: "Son of a grease!"
ZMAL: "Donkey!"
BOOMA: "Owl!" (In Iraq the owl is regarded as a dim-witted bird.)
GAWWAD: "Pimp"
GWAWEED: "Pimps"
BARBOOG: "Slut"
BARABEEG: "Sluts"
GAHBA: "Whore"
GHAB: "Whores"
TFOO 'ALEIK: "Spit on you!"

FIGURES OF SPEECH

RAH ASALLIM 'ALA SADDAM: "I'm gonna go say hello to Saddam." (Used when going to the bathroom to take a shit.)
LIGAFT ILLIHCHAYA MIN TEEZHA 'ENI: "You misunderstood, my friend," or literally, "You caught the saying from its ass, my eye."
SUGUD CHITHIB: "Really?" (Literally, "Truth or lie?")
HELE YABEH SHLON KEIKA: "Hello there, what a babe." (The word *keika* comes from the English word "cake" and is used to describe a hot chick.)
SODEH 'ALEYA: Literally, "black on me" (In Iraq, black is the color of misery, denoting an unfavorable circumstance suffered by the person.)
DA TITBAGHDED 'ALAYA: "Are you Baghdading me, or what?" (The word "Baghdad" is used as a verb here and basically means that someone thinks they're better than you.)
OI WIJJA': This one is difficult to explain in English, but it's along the lines of literally wishing someone pain and sickness when they say or do something revolting.

HERESIES

ALLAH KAREEM: In the Arab world, when something good happens, you say, *Allah kareem* ("God's a genius"). In Iraq, the punks and thugs say "*Allah kareem*" when something breaks or doesn't work. If your car breaks down, you say, "God's a genius."
CHA MINOOH ALLAH: You can say this in response to overly devout people who

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LCD Soundsystem • Blonde Redhead • the New Pornographers • the Black Keys • Regina Spektor • Hot Chip • !!!
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VNV Nation • Sparklehorse • the Nightwatchman • Roky Erickson & the Explosives • Cornelius • CocoRosie
Andrew Bird • the Frames • the Fratellis • Justice • Pharoahe Monch • Fields • the Cribs
Girl Talk • Mike Relm • DJ Heather • Yeva • Pop Levi

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Manu Chao Radio Bemba Sound System • Air • Happy Mondays • Paul Van Dyk
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THIS PAGE:
- GREEN ZONE
  PARTY SPOTS
- CADAVER MEMORIES

"They were piled in the bed of a truck just like lumber, covered with blood, killed in a horrible way."

Get a Room!

Hotels are party central no matter where you are, from spring break in Fort Lauderdale to Operation Whatever They're Calling It Now in Iraq. So we called the top hotels in Baghdad to see whether they could help us to get our thang on. Let's parrrrrrrrrtay!

HOTEL PALESTINE

Vice: Sup bro. If we bring our posse there, what can you offer us? Keep in mind that we are serious about our partying, please.
Anwar (manager): We have tea, coffee, soft drinks, but no liquors…

Wh-wh-what?!?
Well, we have three kinds of restaurant and a coffee shop working. You can bring your own liquor from the airport or duty-free and you can drink in your room.

Sounds lame! What kind of munchies do you have?
People usually order fried chicken, scallops, any kind of steaks, hamburger… Everything you need.

I'll call you back maybe. But I need a hotel that can help me to bring it on!
Most five-star hotels in Baghdad don't have bars.

BAGHDAD HOTEL

Vice: Wuzzzzzzzzuuuupppp! I'm looking to book a room or three to get some major rudeness going on. What do you got?
Jawad (manager): Are you drunk? You are calling a private corporation. Call the other hotels!

So you can't help me out?
Are you dumb or are you just playing dummy? [*hangs up*]

AL-SADEER HOTEL

Vice: So listen, Ahmed. Your town is coming up short on the fiesta tip right now. Can you assist us in our quest to blow the roof off the motherfucker?
Ahmed (receptionist): What you want, we can do it. We work with Kuwait, we work with the military. There is food for all American people. We can get you a turkey sandwich or pork. We also have a special bar with beer, whiskey, and all types of drinks.

Now that's what I'm talking about! Let's do this, Baghdad!

VICE STAFF

My First Corpse

We heard that in Iraq you see your first corpse around the time most American kids have their first sip of soda pop, so we asked a random girl on the street in Baghdad to tell us about the first dead body she ever saw. Talk about trying to get a sip of water out of a fire hydrant.

Niswas: Sure I remember. I was on my way to my best friend's birthday. I was holding in my hand a delicate present. It was a teddy bear, and he had a bouquet, and written on him was "Happy Birthday." All of a sudden I saw about 30 dead people. They were piled in the bed of a truck just like lumber, covered with blood, killed in a horrible way. When I saw that, I didn't feel it in my body, but I felt tears falling down on my hand and the present. And then I knew how stupid and silly I was, and there was this bad feeling born deep inside of me, so that suddenly I hated this life and hated everything.

VICE STAFF

Talk Like an Iraqi

HERESIES (continued)

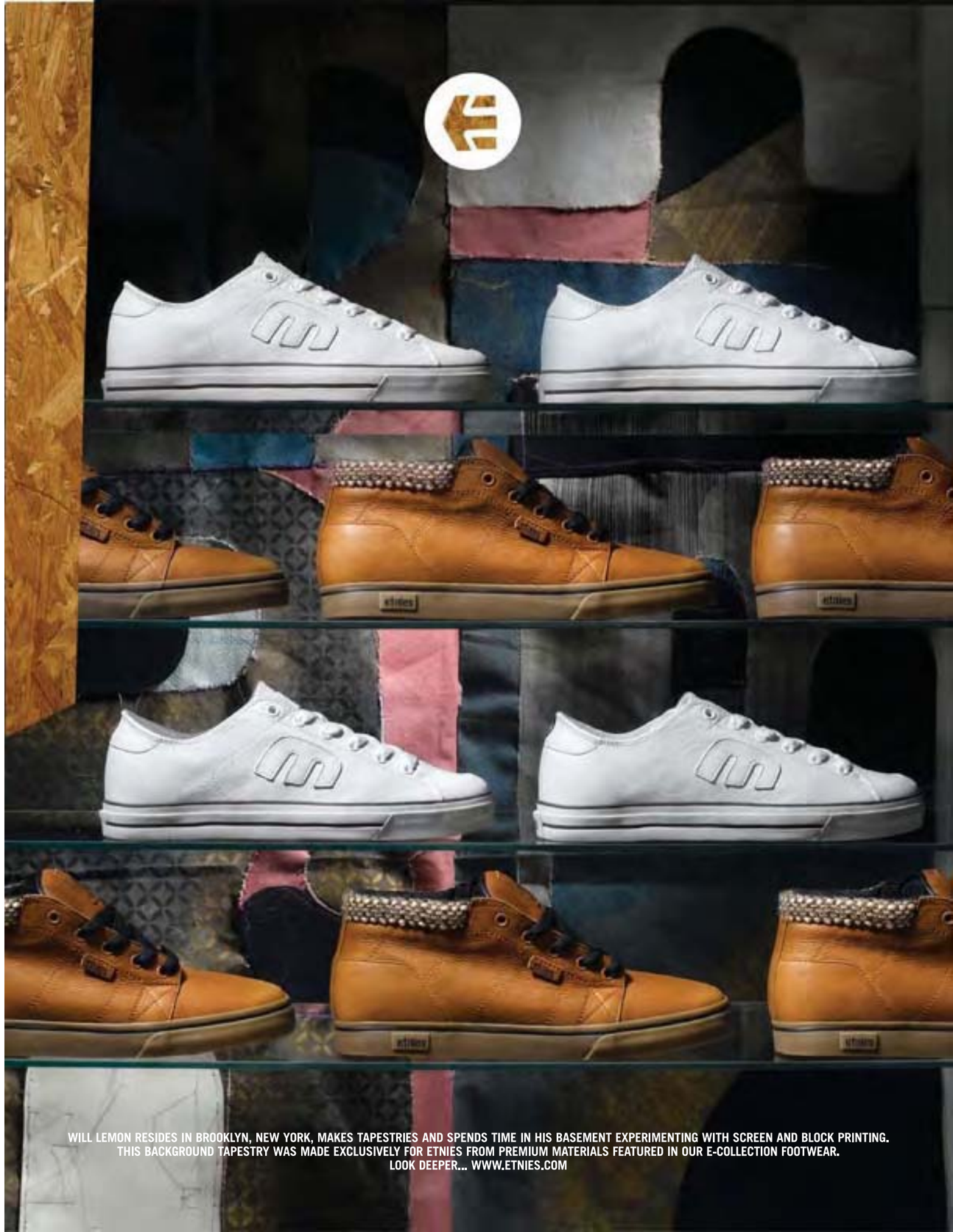
are saying, "Allah this, Allah that," every five seconds. Reply with, "*Cha minooh Allah?*" It's Sadr City street slang. It basically means, "Who's this 'God,' anyways?"

POST-INVASION PHRASES

JEEB IL MUWALLIDA: "Bring the generator."
AKHTHOW SADDAM OO JABOLNAH MEET WAHID IB MAKANA: "They killed Saddam and gave us a hundred other Saddams." (Said, of course, in reference to all the main players in post-invasion Iraq.)
HIL MUSHKILTAKIB ALF OO NUSS: "Solve your problems for 1,500." (This is what dudes say as they walk around Baghdad selling hand grenades. Fifteen hundred is the cost in Iraqi dinars of one grenade.)
NESTALA: "Chocolate" (This word originates from Nestlé, which was the primary distributor of chocolate products in Iraq for decades.)
'ALASS: "Snitch." Literally, "to chew up." (This is a post-invasion word used to describe Iraqi informants who point out valuable targets to kidnapping gangs.)
'ULOOJ: Literally "animals," but nowadays in Iraq this means "Americans." (This term was made popular by the former Iraqi minister of information Mohammad Saeed Al-Sahhaf in televised speeches during the invasion.)

DIRTY TALK

KUSS AKHTAK: It means "your sister's pussy," but it's used kind of like a rougher form of, "whatever," or "your momma." It's a harsh friend-riff curse, not a fight curse.
SHLON TAYEZ EKHABOL: "Look at that ass." (This is what Iraqi men say when a woman with a nice rump passes by.)
FARAHK: Gay man, bottom
FARAHKCHI: Gay man, top (Literally, "boy fucker.")
KAHRA BA ALLAH: This doesn't really translate, but it's something like a combination of "fucking God" and "shit on God." In Iraq it means, "Do you want to step outside?" It's serious.



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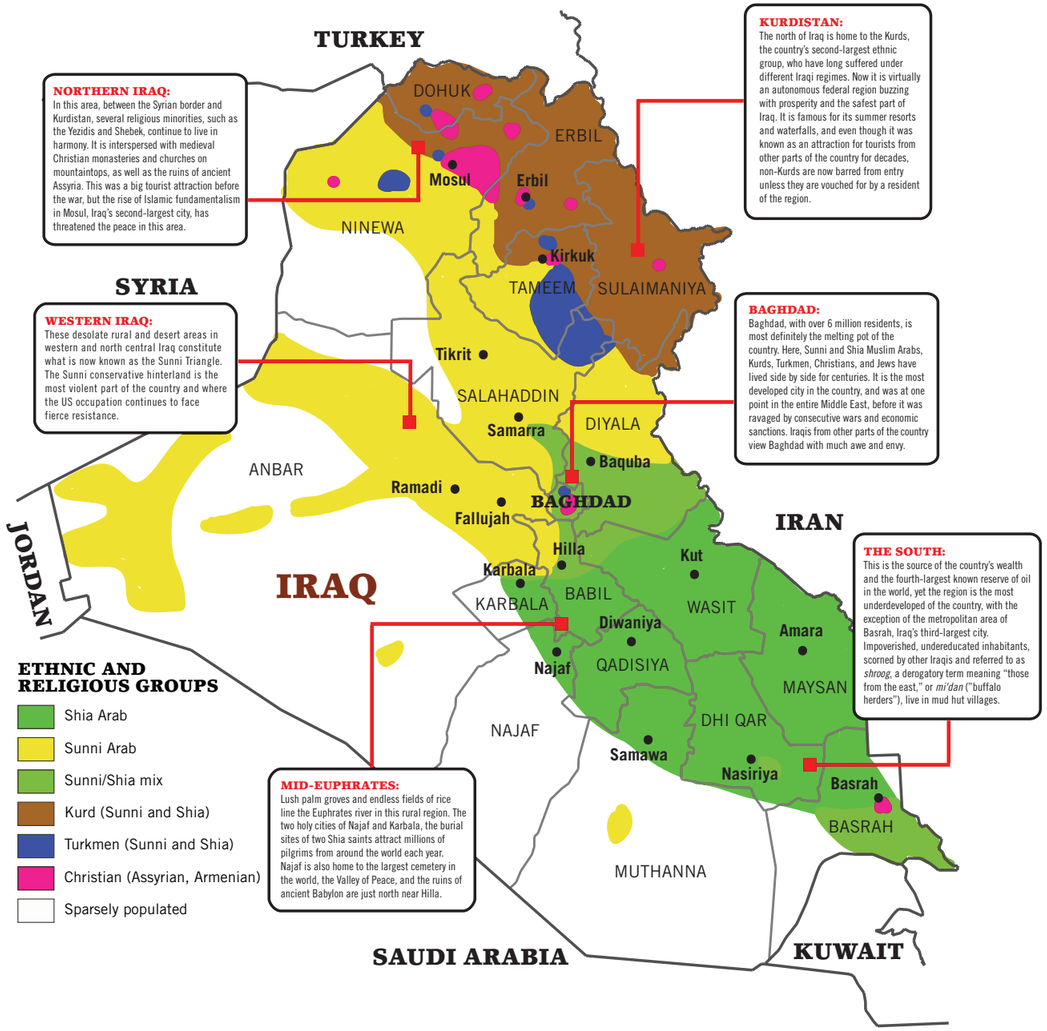
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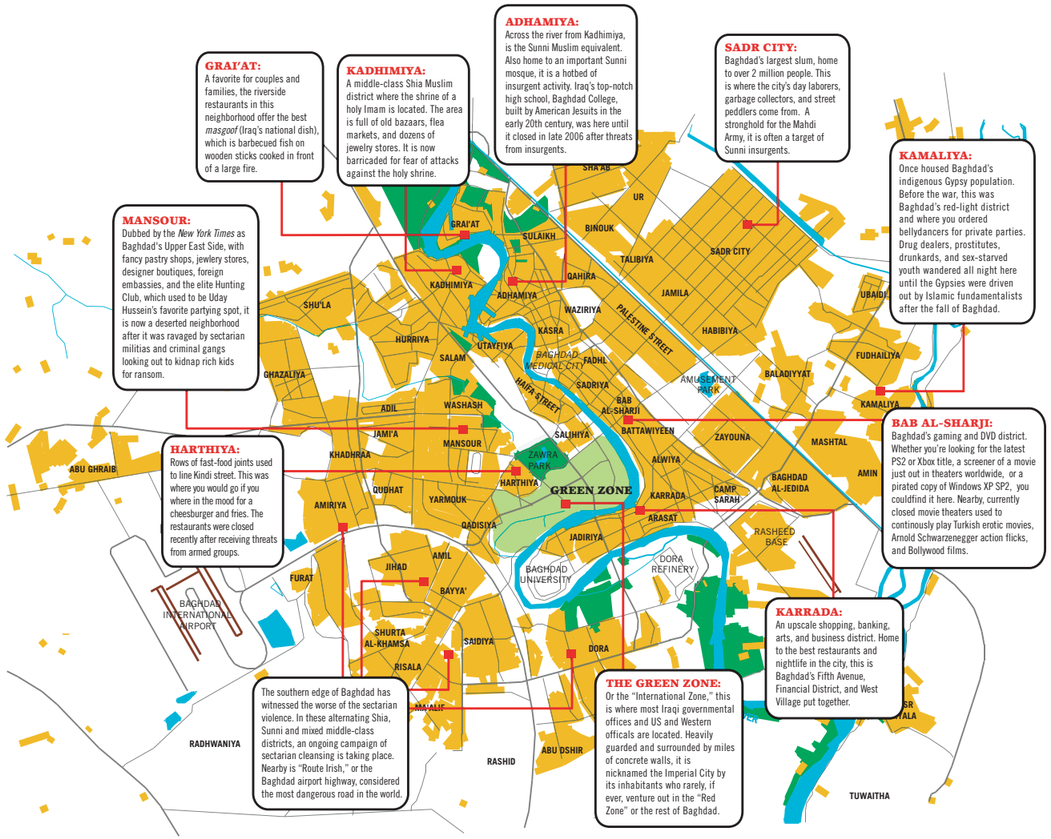
Samarra
Baquba
Ramadi
Fallujah
Hilla
Karbala
Kut
Diwaniya
Amara
Najaf
Samawa
Nasiriya
Basrah
NORTHERN IRAQ:
In this area, between the Syrian border and Kurdistan, several religious minorities, such as the Yezidis and Shebek, continue to live in harmony. It is interspersed with medieval Christian monasteries and churches on mountaintops, as well as the ruins of ancient Assyria. This was a big tourist attraction before the war, but the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, has threatened the peace in this area.
KURDISTAN:
The north of Iraq is home to the Kurds, the country's second-largest ethnic group, who have long suffered under different Iraqi regimes. Now it is virtually an autonomous federal region buzzing with prosperity and the safest part of Iraq. It is famous for its summer resorts and waterfalls, and even though it was known as an attraction for tourists from other parts of the country for decades, non-Kurds are now barred from entry unless they are vouched for by a resident of the region.
WESTERN IRAQ:
These desolate rural and desert areas in western and north central Iraq constitute what is now known as the Sunni Triangle. The Sunni conservative hinterland is the most violent part of the country and where the US occupation continues to face fierce resistance.
BAGHDAD:
Baghdad, with over 6 million residents, is most definitely the melting pot of the country. Here, Sunni and Shia Muslim Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Christians, and Jews have lived side by side for centuries. It is the most developed city in the country, and was at one point in the entire Middle East, before it was ravaged by consecutive wars and economic sanctions. Iraqis from other parts of the country view Baghdad with much awe and envy.
THE SOUTH:
This is the source of the country's wealth and the fourth-largest known reserve of oil in the world, yet the region is the most underdeveloped of the country, with the exception of the metropolitan area of Basrah, Iraq's third-largest city. Impoverished, undereducated inhabitants, scorned by other Iraqis and referred to as *shroog*, a derogatory term meaning "those from the east," or *mi'dan* ("buffalo herders"), live in mud hut villages.
MID-EUPHRATES:
Lush palm groves and endless fields of rice line the Euphrates river in this rural region. The two holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, the burial sites of two Shia saints attract millions of pilgrims from around the world each year. Najaf is also home to the largest cemetery in the world, the Valley of Peace, and the ruins of ancient Babylon are just north near Hilla.
ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS
Shia Arab
Sunni Arab
Sunni/Shia mix
Kurd (Sunni and Shia)
Turkmen (Sunni and Shia)
Christian (Assyrian, Armenian)
Sparsely populated

IRAQ FROM ABOVE

Do you know that thing Denzel Washington said in Philadelphia, *where the mean older lawyers would be equivocating (that means lying) and he'd go, "I don't get it. Tell it to me like I'm a five-year-old." When he said it, he meant, "Cut the shit." But when we say it, we mean, "Seriously, daily reports of murders and thick books about Wolfowitz aren't helping. We. Do not. Get this." So we called up Zeyad, an Iraqi journalist, and said, "Hey Zeyad, this Iraq country thing, tell it to us like we're five-years-old." The rules were "no research" and "no hard thinking." Just give it to us like you're our uncle, driving us from the airport into the city. And this is what he made.*

MAP AND CAPTIONS BY ZEYAD KASIM

lifetime collective
photo by collective member stephen wilde
lifetimecollective.com


GRAI'AT:
A favorite for couples and families, the riverside restaurants in this neighborhood offer the best *masgoof* (Iraq's national dish), which is barbecued fish on wooden sticks cooked in front of a large fire.
KADHIMIYA:
A middle-class Shia Muslim district where the shrine of a holy Imam is located. The area is full of old bazaars, flea markets, and dozens of jewelry stores. It is now barricaded for fear of attacks against the holy shrine.
ADHAMIYA:
Across the river from Kadhimiya, is the Sunni Muslim equivalent. Also home to an important Sunni mosque, it is a hotbed of insurgent activity. Iraq's top-notch high school, Baghdad College, built by American Jesuits in the early 20th century, was here until it closed in late 2006 after threats from insurgents.
SADR CITY:
Baghdad's largest slum, home to over 2 million people. This is where the city's day laborers, garbage collectors, and street peddlers come from. A stronghold for the Mahdi Army, it is often a target of Sunni insurgents.
KAMALIYA:
Once housed Baghdad's indigenous Gypsy population. Before the war, this was Baghdad's red-light district and where you ordered bellydancers for private parties. Drug dealers, prostitutes, drunkards, and sex-starved youth wandered all night here until the Gypsies were driven out by Islamic fundamentalists after the fall of Baghdad.
MANSOUR:
Dubbed by the *New York Times* as Baghdad's Upper East Side, with fancy pastry shops, jewlery stores, designer boutiques, foreign embassies, and the elite Hunting Club, which used to be Uday Hussein's favorite partying spot, it is now a deserted neighborhood after it was ravaged by sectarian militias and criminal gangs looking out to kidnap rich kids for ransom.
HARTHIYA:
Rows of fast-food joints used to line Kindi street. This was where you would go if you where in the mood for a cheesburger and fries. The restaurants were closed recently after receiving threats from armed groups.
BAB AL-SHARJI:
Baghdad's gaming and DVD district. Whether you're looking for the latest PS2 or Xbox title, a screener of a movie just out in theaters worldwide, or a pirated copy of Windows XP SP2, you couldfind it here. Nearby, currently closed movie theaters used to continously play Turkish erotic movies, Arnold Schwarzenegger action flicks, and Bollywood films.
KARRADA:
An upscale shopping, banking, arts, and business district. Home to the best restaurants and nightlife in the city, this is Baghdad's Fifth Avenue, Financial District, and West Village put together.
THE GREEN ZONE:
Or the "International Zone," this is where most Iraqi governmental offices and US and Western officals are located. Heavily guarded and surrounded by miles of concrete walls, it is nicknamed the Imperial City by its inhabitants who rarely, if ever, venture out in the "Red Zone" or the rest of Baghdad.
The southern edge of Baghdad has witnessed the worse of the sectarian violence. In these alternating Shia, Sunni and mixed middle-class districts, an ongoing campaign of sectarian cleansing is taking place. Nearby is "Route Irish," or the Baghdad airport highway, considered the most dangerous road in the world.
GRAI'AT
KADHIMIYA
ADHAMIYA
SULAIKH
SHA'AB
UR
BINOUK
TALIBIYA
SADR CITY
QAHIRA
JAMILA
UBAIDI
SHU'LA
WAZIRIYA
PALESTINE STREET
HABIBIYA
KASRA
HURRIYA
UTAYFIYA
SALAM
BAGHDAD MEDICAL CITY
FADHL
FUDHAILIYA
GHAZALIYA
SADRIYA
AMUSEMENT PARK
BALADIYYAT
HAIFA STREET
KAMALIYA
ADIL
WASHASH
BAB AL-SHARJI
BATTAWIYEEN
ZAYOUNA
MASHTAL
JAMI'A
MANSOUR
SALIHIYA
ABU GHRAIB
KHADHRAA
ZAWRA'A PARK
ALWIYA
AMIN
HARTHIYA
GREEN ZONE
KARRADA
BAGHDAD AL-JEDIDA
QUDHAT
YARMOUK
CAMP SARAH
AMIRIYA
ARASAT
QADISIYA
RASHEED BASE
JADIRIYA
AMIL
DORA REFINERY
JIHAD
FURAT
BAGHDAD UNIVERSITY
BAYYA'
BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
SHURTA AL-KHAMSA
SAIDIYA
DORA
RISALA
MA'ALIF
RADHWANIYA
RASHID
ABU D'SHIR
TUWAITHA

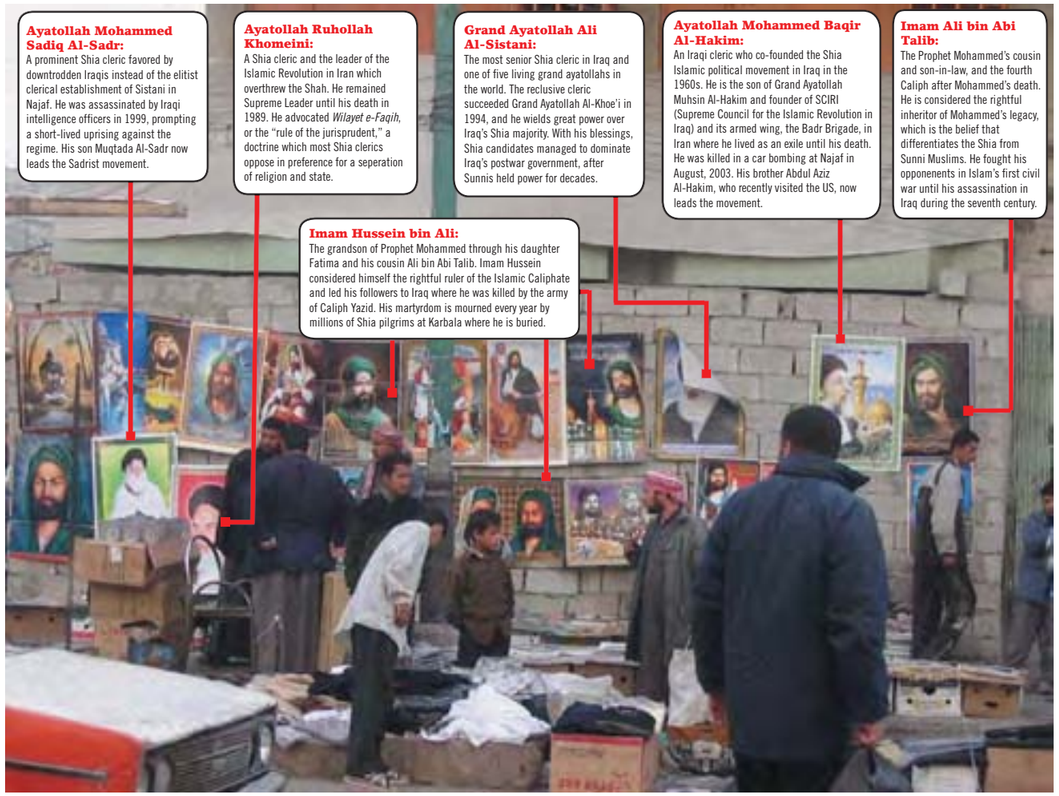
BIRD'S-EYE ON BAGHDAD

Keeping up with the daily, nightly, weekly, and yearly suicide bombs and gunfights and political machinations in Baghdad neighborhoods with names like "Makes-No-Sense" and "Complicated-to-Read" is starting to confuse us. If you are a smart person who makes a living out of following the situation, sure, they fall into a body of knowledge and you get it. But for Eddie Lunchpail and Johnny Coffee-and-a-Donut (and us), trying to get a grasp of what's going on by reading the regular coverage of Iraq is like trying to learn to multiply by ordering tapes of the Feynman Lectures. *And you know what else? The reporters who write those dispatches don't get it either. If they did, they might have told us what Baghdad looks like. Do you know what it looks like, even?*

Anyway, stepping off the soapbox, we asked Zeyad to tell us about the basic layout of the city. The rules, again, were no research and no deep thinking. Just tell us what the locals know off the top of their lovely, well-oiled heads of hair.

MAP AND CAPTIONS BY ZEYAD KASIM

SUPRA
Chad Muska's Skytop
WWW.ONEDIST.COM
SUPRA


Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq Al-Sadr:
A prominent Shia cleric favored by downtrodden Iraqis instead of the elitist clerical establishment of Sistani in Najaf. He was assassinated by Iraqi intelligence officers in 1999, prompting a short-lived uprising against the regime. His son Muqtada Al-Sadr now leads the Sadrist movement.
Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini:
A Shia cleric and the leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran which overthrew the Shah. He remained Supreme Leader until his death in 1989. He advocated *Wilayet e-Faqih*, or the "rule of the jurisprudent," a doctrine which most Shia clerics oppose in preference for a seperation of religion and state.
Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani:
The most senior Shia cleric in Iraq and one of five living grand ayatollahs in the world. The reclusive cleric succeeded Grand Ayatollah Al-Khoe'i in 1994, and he wields great power over Iraq's Shia majority. With his blessings, Shia candidates managed to dominate Iraq's postwar government, after Sunnis held power for decades.
Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir Al-Hakim:
An Iraqi cleric who co-founded the Shia Islamic political movement in Iraq in the 1960s. He is the son of Grand Ayatollah Muhsin Al-Hakim and founder of SCIRI (Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq) and its armed wing, the Badr Brigade, in Iran where he lived as an exile until his death. He was killed in a car bombing at Najaf in August, 2003. His brother Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, who recently visited the US, now leads the movement.
Imam Ali bin Abi Talib:
The Prophet Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, and the fourth Caliph after Mohammed's death. He is considered the rightful inheritor of Mohammed's legacy, which is the belief that differentiates the Shia from Sunni Muslims. He fought his opponenents in Islam's first civil war until his assassination in Iraq during the seventh century.
Imam Hussein bin Ali:
The grandson of Prophet Mohammed through his daughter Fatima and his cousin Ali bin Abi Talib. Imam Hussein considered himself the rightful ruler of the Islamic Caliphate and led his followers to Iraq where he was killed by the army of Caliph Yazid. His martyrdom is mourned every year by millions of Shia pilgrims at Karbala where he is buried.

PICTURES OF CLERICS ON MY BEDROOM WALL

This is a Basra street vendor who sells posters of Shia holy figures. About 60 percent of Iraqis are Shia, and about a third of that percentage are super-duper into it. These hardcore little gangs run the show in Iraq. They're militant, young, puritanical, and xenophobic. They are also really into the old guys on the wall back there. These are their heroes and leaders.

Some of these role models are quiet curmudgeons who operate out of holes in the desert and are content to just send little notes to their followers every now and then. Others, like Al-Sadr, are behind the wheel of the tanker-truck-filled-with-dynamite that is the insurgency in Iraq. Those videos you saw on the internet of dudes shoving bombs into dead dogs to make IEDs? These guys are at the base of that bunny hole. They are very serious.

PHOTO AND CAPTIONS BY ZEYAD KASIM

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KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY

A Mom and Her Son Do Their Time

Even after the guards got caught stacking naked prisoners like a hairy, human-rights-violating cheerleading team in 2004, very little changed in the awful conditions at Abu Ghraib. The prison had to be completely emptied in March 2006 to remove it from "worst place on earth" status.

Sana and her son Saleh spent a few months as prisoners there before it was shut down, and then they told us their stories and then we cried.

They detained my husband—he was a Baath Party member. He died from a heart attack, which was caused by his torture. We took his body from the prison in Abu Ghraib. After the funeral ceremony, the police knocked down the door to my house. They were fully armed and took my eldest son from me like barbarians.

I was taken to a big school where the rest of the detainees were blindfolded and handcuffed to the back of a pickup truck. It was early December 2005, and the air chilled my bones. The next morning they took me to a classroom. I realized this by seeing desks and a blackboard on wall. No one spoke to me. They fed me a piece of bread and gave me a glass of water. Eight other women were with me in the same room, each in a corner. Not a single word was exchanged between us. We didn't know what crime we committed or why we were brought to the school.

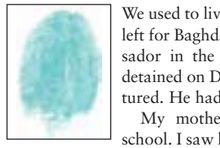
There were voices of people outside the room—screaming, crying, and shouting. Males were being tortured. We were kept in the room until 5:30 PM, and then we were once again blindfolded and taken to a place where there were about 35 women. It was a women's prison where prostitutes used to be jailed.

We were kept there for two days, then we were transferred to the second floor of Abu Ghraib and isolated in small, filthy, two-by-two rooms. There was a shared toilet, which was so dirty you couldn't tell what color it was. It was covered in excrement. After five days, I was called to meet an American official. He accused me of hiding terrorists inside my house. He asked where they were, and I swore I didn't know what they were talking about. This did not convince him. He slapped me many times and he threatened to rape me. However, I was not raped. None of us were raped as far as I know.

Our duty during the day was to empty the men's toilets by taking buckets full of excrement to outdoor areas. Weeks went by. No one told us anything. We weren't sleeping well due to males screaming from torture at night. Suddenly we were ordered to clean our whole floor in addition to the male floors because UN representatives were coming to visit the building. We were released two days after they came.

I still don't know why I was detained—neither do the women who were with me. After I was released, a lawyer friend of mine tried her best to present my complaints to Parliament. There was no response. It was a total humiliation.

SANA X AS TOLD TO ARKAN HAMED



We used to live in Samara before the invasion, but we left for Baghdad afterward. My father was an ambassador in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was detained on December 5, 2005, and was severely tortured. He had a heart attack and died. He was 73.

My mother and I were detained at a nearby school. I saw her at the facility after I arrived, but she was moved after two days. I was kept there for two weeks. I was beaten day and night. There was absolutely no reason given for my arrest, or for anyone else's. That's part of the game for them.

They were looking for someone whom I didn't know. They threatened to rape my mother right before my eyes if I didn't tell them where he was hiding. "But I don't know him," I said. If I had known him, I would have told.

After this, I was sent to Abu Ghraib. I was handed to American prison guards. They had clippers and threatened to cut off my pinkie fingers and my ears. They also used an electric prod on my feet, knees, and neck. I always cried out, because those who didn't respond to the pain would get it on their genitals.

The "party" started at 2 AM on the second day. "Party" was their word. Several prisoners were gathered in the hall. We were handcuffed and blindfolded, then kicked, slapped, and cursed. If we didn't respond to a kick, we would get another kick. Their strength increased until they got a cry.

The violence continued every three days, always at night. I was interrogated every morning, sometimes into the afternoon. When UN representatives arrived at the prison, all the detainees were gathered in a big yard. On this day, I saw the assistant manager of the prison for the first time. He was an elegant American man with a white mustache. He threatened us quietly, in a kind voice, as though it was no threat at all. He said that if we were asked about conditions at Abu Ghraib, we were not to complain.

It's needless to say that the food was not sufficient and the toilets were like nothing I have seen before. And as you know, there were speakers inside the cells that projected very loud voices and noises, especially at night. That was awful. It devastates you in the weakest hour, after getting only a few minutes of sleep.

After six months of detention, I was changed from a very calm, responsible lawyer into a wrecked man with no desires, no wishes, no interests, no work, no beliefs, and no dignity. I used to adore my country but not anymore. Ethics? Standards? They are all smashed, thanks to the Americans. They have wrecked everything lovely in my life. They must know that millions of Iraqis want revenge. So let them continue—Iraqis won't forget the harm done to them.

SALEH X AS TOLD TO ARKAN HAMED

Photo by Reuters

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GOAL!

Soccer the Iraqi Way

Iraqi people have always really liked soccer. In any neighborhood you go, you'll find kids and men alike playing the game passionately, as though great kingdoms depend on the outcome. After the game is done, they'll sit in a café drinking tea and talking about the Iraqi soccer team, debating which players are good and which are bad. They might be laughing about it one second, and the next they'll be jumping from their chairs and shrieking at each other. But it's really just talk between friends who love each other and soccer.

When I was still a boy and I used to skip school to play soccer in the streets, I began to hear this name repeated all over town: Uday. Saddam's son. Day by day, this name got bigger. Scarier and stranger stories were told about him. Wherever you went, you'd find someone talking about Uday. There is a joke in Iraq: They call us the Third World because each place you go, you will find two guys talking about another one.

One day, Uday was put in charge of the Olympic Committee. That meant he was the leader of all Iraqi sports and that, in his mind, the quality of all Iraqi sports reflected on him personally. He took it really, really fucking seriously.

This was OK at first—the Iraqi soccer team was the best in the Middle East and Asia. But then the soccer team, and Uday, and everything in Iraqi sports and life began to get worse. Uday pressured the team to improve, but like everyone knows, athletes don't thrive on intimidation and fear. Rather than understanding that and finding new, progressive ways to coach his team, Uday took another route, settling on imprisonment and torture for any player who missed a goal.

He got into the practice of threatening the players before each match. He would go down to their locker room and talk to them. This was very serious talking. He would remind them what would happen if any player did poorly in the game. Uday saw each match as a battle and he eventually infected the players with this view. We watched it happen: The Iraqi soccer team became like crazed, desperate soldiers. And in whispers in the stadiums all the people would say, "Fucking crazy Uday."

After Saddam's fall, a friend of mine showed me where Uday tortured his soccer players. The devices he used were like tools from the Middle Ages, like things of Roman princes. It was so weird.

There was a 50-pound black iron mask. Uday would make players put it on and stand up in the sun for the entire day. (This is in our fucking hot summer, where it routinely gets up to 120 degrees.) No one can withstand this kind of hell, and the players would, after only an hour, fall to their knees. Then Uday's guards would wake them up with a few full-force kicks in the ribs and stand them up again under the sun.

You understand that Uday was really a sadist? That he only got sexual pleasure when he hurt people? There were other things I am embarrassed to explain. There was a pear-shaped iron tool. It had two handles and was kind of like a car jack. Uday would put this into a man's ass and tear it open. He did it to soccer players and artists. He did very disgusting things. He raped many women and fed them to his tiger.

That's right, Uday had a big tiger. Sometimes when he went out, he'd take his tiger with him to walk in the streets along with his girls and his guards, just to show the Iraqi people he was the master.

But now that is all over. The Iraqi soccer team has no more Uday. He has gone to hell.

HAYDER DAFFAR

The ass-ripper.

The hot box.

Photo by AP

Chad Muska In Muska Slim Denim, CM Blazer, Black Jack Hoody, Knife Tee, Muskall Tee, 24k Buckle, Philis Hat
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SUNNI OR SHIITE?

Speak Up!

After the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003, the army was dissolved, and former high-ranking Baath Party members were removed from their positions. Newly bereft of economic and political power, many young Sunnis—especially in the very conservative region of Anbar—heard the ideas of al-Qaeda and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi and started to think, "These guys just might have something here." In the past three years, many of the young, jobless men in Anbar have been indoctrinated. Steadily, the insurgency has become more radical and more criminal.

You can't find these men by looking for them. Even as an experienced Iraqi journalist and a Sunni from Anbar province (the hotbed of Sunni insurgency), I cannot ask anyone to meet the jihadis. They would either laugh in my face, ignore me, or kill me.

But in December 2006, the insurgents found me. It was in the hours just before dawn, while I drove down a road along the Euphrates River. Without warning, a large, black BMW with blackened windows pulled around me and forced me to stop. Three young guys armed with AK-47s, their faces masked, got out of the car shouting, "Show me your ID! Show me your ID! Sunni or Shiite? Sunni or Shiite?"

In Iraq, this is a question that decides whether you live or die.

I told them I was a Sunni and showed them my ID, but many people have faked IDs in this region. They kept asking questions. "From which quarter of Baghdad do you come? Who do you know there? What do you do?" I answered them all, not knowing that they were listening not to what I said, but how I said it.

"Your accent is fine," their leader finally concluded. "If you had spoken wrongly, we would have killed you." It was the early morning and for some reason, the three boys stopped and chatted with me for a bit. Their leader spoke casually now, as to a brother. "The Shia from southern Iraq nowadays use license plates from Anbar, claiming that the car's owner is a Sunni. It doesn't fool us—we get them by their accent, always."

"So you control this area?" I asked. He said, "Of course! This is the Emirate of Ramadi!"

"But if you control the area, why are you masked?"

"This," he said with anger, "is the Emirate of Ramadi." He paused for emphasis. "To be ruled by the true believers in honor of Allah and the Prophet, peace be upon him."

Perhaps he did rule the territory, but how was it defined? What did he hold? What did it mean to rule?

During the last months, the situation in western Iraq has turned into anarchy. Everywhere, tiny little emirates—self-declared fiefdoms of gun-toting teenage boys—are proclaimed nightly, or weekly, or monthly. Who can say? I myself know of the "Emirate of Ramadi," the "Emirate of Haditha," and the "Emirate of Rawa." Also, some boys from the small rural village of al-Sufia recently declared their village to be an emirate. It would be laughable, if it were not potentially deadly for many, many people.

From al-Qaim to Baghdad, today, everybody does what he wants. It is a complete jumble: There are towns controlled by the government, areas controlled by jihadis, areas controlled by tribes in alliance with the US forces, and still other areas controlled by tribes who stand against both the US and the resistance. The worst areas are those ruled by the jihadis—young, ruthless fanatics like these three who now stood chatting with me.

The younger man said, "If I see any Shiite, I will definitely kill him."

"Do you think that killing Shiites here could result in heavy retaliation by Shia militias?" I said. "Wouldn't it be better to kill Shiites in Baghdad?"

"Shiites and all traitors and non-believers should be killed on the spot and at any place. I would even kill my father if he betrayed Islam!"

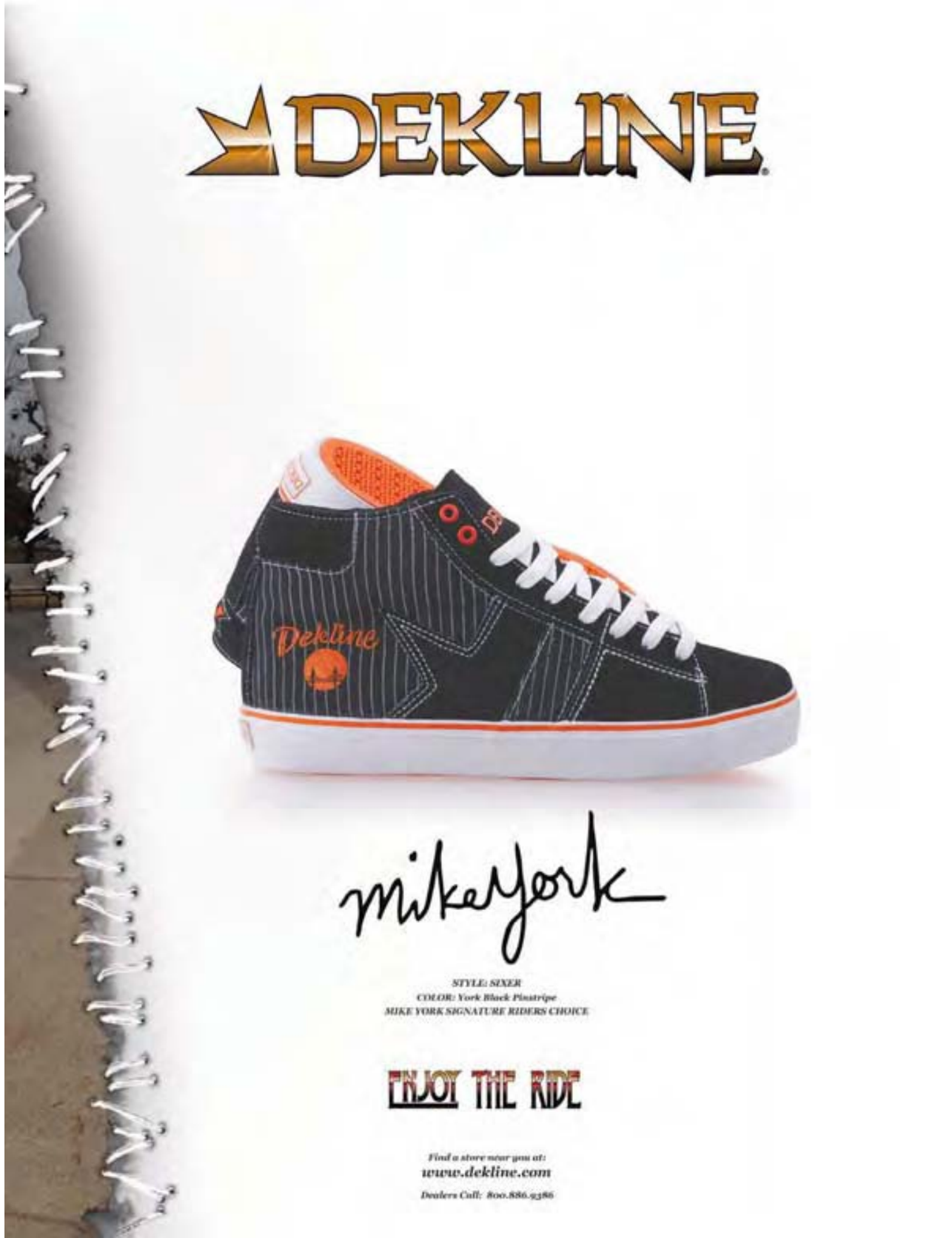
The professions are real. Since the death of Abu Musab, there is no more leadership, no clear order. Jihadis have even killed sheikhs who challenge their position or who resist their demands for money and weapons.

And the result: Our life has become more absurd. Rumors circulate all the time about what has been banned by the jihadis. Soon enough it will be, "Tomatoes and cucumbers are no longer tolerated in one salad, since tomatoes are female and cucumbers are male. And goats should have their butts covered, since they expose their genitals." This all sounds ridiculous, but rumor rules Iraq now. And how can you be sure that the guys with the guns know when something is only a rumor?

One of the jihadis began to fidget. Why had I asked questions? Who was I? They began to tense, but then, thanks to God, other cars began to pass, cars perhaps carrying Shiites, and so they took leave in the traditional manner: "OK, cousin, have a good trip, God be with you!"

DAUD S., INSTITUTE OF WAR AND PEACE REPORTING

Photo by AP



INSURGENT VS. INSURGENT

In Iraq, Everyone Fights Everyone

Abu Omar cleans his machine gun with an old checkered Arab headdress that he also uses to conceal his identity when he's fighting on the streets. But this insurgent hasn't fought the Americans in two weeks. The growing influence of al-Qaeda in the Sunni city of Ramadi has alarmed his Baathist group, which is losing influence to a new generation of Iraqi Talibans.

Abu Omar leads a cell of 30 fighters from his neighborhood in the southern outskirts of Ramadi. They belong to the 20th Revolution Brigade, a group of former Baathists and army officers who are believed to be commanded by Harith Al-Dhari, a prominent Sunni cleric and critic of growing Shia influence who leads a Sunni clerics' group from exile in Egypt. Abu Omar says their commanders urge them not to fight other insurgents, but he says Dhari is losing influence over his organization as they stand up to al-Qaeda's domination in Iraq's desert-filled rebel province of Anbar.

Al-Qaeda militants have long killed policemen and Iraqi soldiers working for local authorities and often drag out so-called "spies" or "traitors" from their homes to execute them in broad daylight, beheading victims with a kitchen knife and dumping their bodies on main roads to instill fear in the hearts of residents. Al-Qaeda militants, who have huge amounts of funding according to several sources in insurgent groups, try to implement their own social laws from banning smoking to killing ice sellers, sweet sellers, and barbers under the pretext that it's forbidden for people to do anything that wasn't done 1,400 years ago under the Prophet Mohammed's state. Abu Omar says al-Qaeda has a double standard. "Why do they use explosives and guns and drive cars? They should go back to horses and fight with swords," he said.

Another member of the 20th Revolution Brigade says his group only allied with al-Qaeda because of their shared vision of a Sunni-dominated Iraq but admits that things have changed: "Now, we've lived with them and their ridiculous ways, we know we would rather be ruled by Bush or even the Kuwaitis." The group says al-Qaeda's unlimited supply of money is very suspicious. The other member, who wished only to be named as Ahmed, said al-Qaeda is funded by foreign intelligence agencies that seek to further destabilize Iraq for their own interests—a vision shared by the United States and parts of the Iraq government.

Abu Omar says his men have killed eight al-Qaeda fighters in targeted killings in Ramadi during the past week alone. "We are still inferior in terms of strength, but we can pick off their fighters through our intelligence when they are unsuspecting."

Most of Anbar's tribes have openly declared war on al-Qaeda and the government has pledged its support and funding to arm the tribes and aid them in clearing the western towns of al-Qaeda's presence.

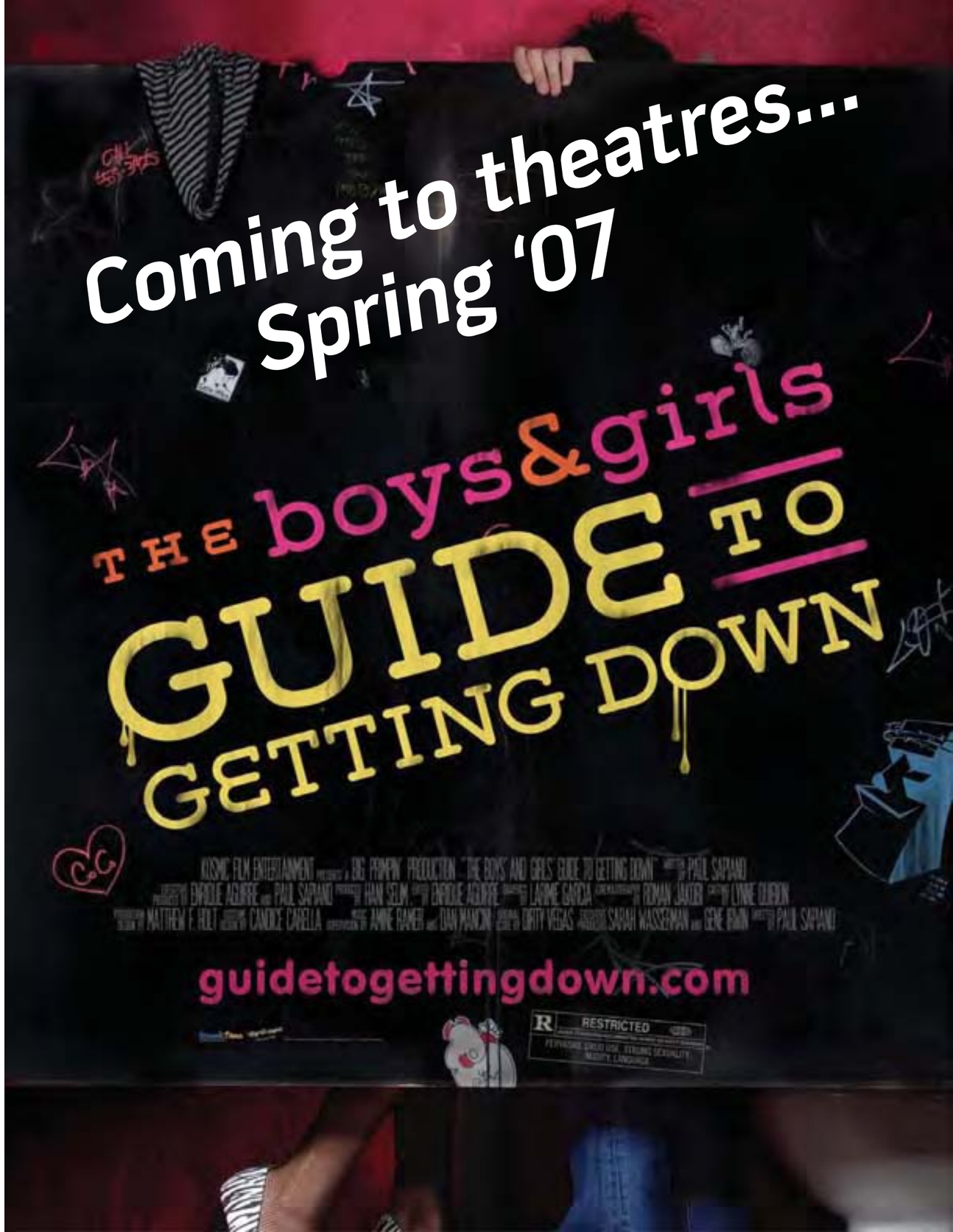
Ali Omar, a sympathizer with al-Qaeda believes the group should fight everyone who doesn't agree with its cause, "We have to purify the people and guide them to the way of Wahhabism [a strict Sunni sect that despises Shia]. If someone stands against this, then we must execute them, including other members of the resistance," he said.

The fight between insurgents is a boost to the government which wants to see al-Qaeda and other extremist groups driven out of Iraq by the country's Sunni population who have so far given them sanctuary.

But 20th Revolution Brigade commander Abu Omar believes the fight will be long. "They have unlimited funding but we have unlimited determination. In the end, one will cancel out the other. Let's hope will beats wealth."

UTHMAN HASAN

Photo by AP



Real Iraqi papers... or are they?

COUNTERFEIT IRAQI

From Visas and Passports to a License to Fuck

For many years, I've known this guy who makes counterfeit documents. He's not the only one in Iraq doing it, but he's one of the best. He can fake anything from a passport to a visa. When my friends and I were in the Iraqi army and wanted out, he forged papers for all of us to get on sick leave. He is still in operation in the war zone, so let's just call him "W" for now. I called him on the phone recently from Damascus, where I am a refugee from the war.

Vice: Hello W!
W: Hi Hayder. I miss you, man. I heard you are in Damascus now.

For the time being, but the Syrian government just told us we have 30 days to get out of here. Why are you still in Baghdad?
Hey, I never leave Baghdad—and definitely not now.

Why? It's the most dangerous place in the world.
Sure, but this is the place for me to make a living. People here need me and I need their money.

What are you doing most often now?
People want to get the hell out of Iraq, but they don't have the proper documents. So I make these papers for people. I can't explain it more right now. We are on the phone, dude. *[laughs]*

Please, W. You must answer me. Don't laugh, just answer. You make me lose my mind, motherfucker.
You are a motherfucker too! OK, fine, ask me whatever. But please, short questions.

Who taught you to be a counterfeiter?
It was a long time ago, during the war between Iran and Iraq. Most Iraqis were in the army, and they wanted to be put on sick leave to get out. I met a guy named Hamed who taught me the basics, but it's something I learned by myself, too. I would spend hours just figuring how to make a realistic visa. Day by day, I am getting better.

How old are you?
Thirty-eight. I was born in Sadr City, so you know that my neighborhood was doing anything it could to go against Saddam. I didn't always fake documents for the money. Many times I did it for free, just to help people fuck Saddam.

What did you study when you went to school?
I graduated from a fine arts college. I studied to be a painter. But it's funny because it was my job as a counterfeiter that made me like to paint. Forging documents made me want to go to fine arts college.

What's the hardest forgery you ever did?
Well, under Saddam many Iraqis left Iraq—especially after 1990 when we were put under sanctions. One day, a guy came to me and he told me his brother lived in some Arab country. He went there just to work to help his family back here in Iraq, but then he got in really big trouble. He stabbed someone in the stomach, and he was being called back to Iraq to go to jail in Abu Ghraib. So I forged him some papers that led him back to his family instead of to jail.

You saved his life. I knew you were really smart, but not like that. What about passports—are they hard?
I don't actually fake a passport from scratch. I buy real ones from people who work at the passport office, and then I modify them for each customer. One day, some guy came to me with a foreign passport he had found. I put his picture in it and inscribed it with dates to leave Iraq.

How much do you charge for passports?
Sometimes I take $500 and sometimes $2,000. It depends on the person, what he can afford, and what he wants.

And for visas?
Those are really difficult, so I charge anywhere from $6,000 to $8,000.

I heard you fake marriage certificates too. What do people do with those?
It's tough here if you have a girlfriend and you don't have a special place to take her and make love. So people come to me to fake this paper that says they are husband and wife and then they can go to a hotel to get a room to have sex in. You know, we live in the Middle East, so we have problems with anything sexual. But I don't mind. These hangups make money for me.

HAYDER DAFFAR

FARAHKCHI PRIDE

Iraq's Gays Know No Shame

I know one gay guy. I met him about eight years ago at the Baghdad fine arts college. It's weird because he is married and has very cute twins, but all his friends know he is gay. We call him farahkchi *which means "boy fucker," but we call all of our friends that. It is hard to know who is really gay. Iraqi men are generally very cosmopolitan and very preened. The men all pluck their eyebrows and even the top parts of their beards. Men hold hands and kiss on the cheek. There are a lot of gay barbers, designers, and actors. We have many gays, but this culture is like your military: Don't ask, don't tell.*

For men of age who have wives, it is OK to be effeminate. But for teenage boys it's not good and they get picked on. The only gays who get killed are the homeless gay teenage prostitutes. The militias kill them like dogs.

I called my gay friend (we'll call him "G") in Syria, where he recently moved. Compared to Iraq, Syria is gay heaven.

Vice: Hi, G. What you doing now?
G: I was running, just to keep my fitness.

Oh yeah, you need that, fat boy. You've got to look good in case you meet some gay.
Shut your mouth, silly guy. For five days, I haven't met one. It's so weird. Maybe if I don't find one, I'll come to fuck you.

Hey motherfucker, that's not my job.
Yes, I know, but if I don't find some gay to fuck, I must choose one from my friends. No no, I am just kidding.

Tell me G, why do you like being gay? You already have a wife and kids.
Hey, what do you mean? It's a weird question. Why are you asking that? Tell me quick or I will come to fuck you.

Because I know you very well and because you're honest. And you have a lot of experience.
Hey, eat shit, OK?

[*laughs*] Why?
Because you ask me a silly question. Gay is gay. They just love big dick.

Do you have a big one, G?
You want to know what I have, baby, just come over.

Shut up and tell me.
Sure dude, I have a very big one.

What do you like a gay to do to you?
I just fuck them.

I know you fuck them, but what do you like them to do first?
First I like to drink with him. Then he must lick all of my body, especially my dick.

Can you describe gay life in Iraq?
Sure. We have a secret life, you know. Traditions, religion, law, society—it's all against us and makes us out to be devils. But in spite of that, we can meet and make love undercover.

Women are nice, especially their asses. But I hate tits. I respect a woman because she will be a great mother.

You left Baghdad and now you are in Syria. Do you meet many gays here?
Yes! Here you can find one each day, so easily.

What's the difference between Iraqi and Syrian gays?
They have a different ass. Here, I really like the ass. You try Syrian ass, then you know what ass means. If you want to come here, I can show you everything. Not just theoretically.

Fuck you, you fucking gay.
Oh Hayder, I am just kidding. But really, I hate this conversation. If people want to know, they can try it. Then they will know. If it's bad, then they never have to do it again.

You're right. What kind of body do you like?
Slim but not weak and bony. Shaven. Smooth skin and a really nice, fresh, mushy ass.

What do women mean to you?
Women are nice, especially their asses. But I hate tits. I respect a woman because she will be a great mother.

Good answer. So, G, you can go now and try to find someone to fuck. I wish you good luck.
Thank you! And please slap your ass for me.

OK, I will do it just for you, gayfucker. Here you go.
Yeah, I like this.

HAYDER DAFFAR

Photo by another farahkchi.

This is the hairdresser who was shot dead outside of my house. Her body was lying there for four hours before an American patrol came and cleaned the scene up. I couldn't get close enough to get a clearer photo because we weren't sure whether the body was booby trapped—or being watched by snipers. Photos by the author.

LIFE IN HELL

A Baghdad Diary

Running for your life from fundamentalist bandits, helplessly watching innocent women being shot in the street, and car-bomb explosions that shatter your bedroom window... Just another humdrum day in the life of a student in Baghdad.

Last June, just a few days after I had finished my final exams for the second term of pharmacy school in Baghdad, I traveled to Jordan and stayed there with my family for over three months. Eventually, we had to return to Iraq because it was getting increasingly difficult for Iraqis to remain in Jordan for long periods.

I returned to Baghdad on October 10 via the land route. The trip was the most horrifying experience I've ever had in my life—and I've taken this route at least twice every year. We were constantly watching out for fake patrols or being chased by bandits. It took us almost 15 hours to reach Baghdad. It usually takes eight hours from Amman.

There were hundreds of army men and vehicles at the gates of Baghdad. They were searching every car that entered the city. After they checked ours and let us in, I looked around the streets. My city was completely changed. It was nothing like the Baghdad I'd left just months before. The streets were packed with US and Iraqi army and police patrols, checkpoints, and concrete blocks. Many buildings were dusty and destroyed, the streets were desolate, piles of garbage were accumulating on sidewalks, and traffic lights were broken.

It looked like the apocalypse had come.

I went to see some of my friends soon after I got home. They told me about the dead bodies lying on the streets because of sectarian violence, and how formerly mixed neighborhoods were turning into Sunni or Shia neighborhoods. People were being forced to leave their homes because they were from the wrong sect for their particular area.

I was very troubled with what I heard and I was afraid to leave the house for over two weeks. As the days passed by, however, I got used to this new situation, and I also grew accustomed to hearing almost every day that one of our relatives, friends, neighbors, or loved ones had been killed due to sectarian violence, car bombs, random shootings, or IED explosions.

After only three weeks back in Baghdad, I witnessed several incidents that have changed my life forever.

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A mortar shell hit right outside our front door recently. We were very lucky that it didn't land even ten feet closer to us.

This was a car bomb that went off on my street. When it exploded, my bedroom windows shattered.

The first was when I was chatting with a group of friends on the street in front of my house. Suddenly, out of the blue, a strange-looking man rushed out of a house 20 meters away from us. It was like a scene out of a horror movie. He was blindfolded, his mouth was duct-taped, and his hands were tied behind his back. There was blood all over him. The man blindly crossed the street and stopped outside a store. "Untie me! Open my eyes, please! Help!" he was screaming. A few people ran out to help him. He kept saying, "Please take me to my house, they will kill me," over and over again. Someone put him in a taxi and they drove away.

At first we concluded that he was kidnapped and being held in that house, but then we heard his story from the family that lived there. They said that they were sitting in their backyard, waiting for sunset—it was Ramadan and they were fasting—and suddenly what seemed like a corpse was thrown into their yard over the back fence of the house. They thought he was dead at first, but the body just stood up and moved. There were girls sitting in the yard as well, so they began to scream when the man started running around, because it was such a strange scene. I mean, I freaked out when I saw him too. "Please, don't scream. I'm kidnapped. They will hear you," he begged them. The girls kept screaming, so he ran out to the street, where we saw him coming out.

I can't deny that I was terrified. I stood like a statue until the whole scene ended. I wanted to cry after that. We can't even know if our neighbors are friends or enemies.

Another incident was five weeks after my return, and it was even more disturbing. The life of an innocent young hairdresser ended horribly and I saw it happen.

She was about to go home. After she closed up her shop, around 5:30 PM, she stopped a taxi. Just as she was about to get in, another car with four young men inside screeched to a halt, blocking the way of the taxi. One gunman—he couldn't have been over 18—leapt out of the car and dragged the bewildered woman out of the taxi. He put a black plastic bag on her head as she kicked and screamed, and then he shot her. He got back in and their car screeched away as bystanders stared in disbelief. The hairdresser's corpse remained lying in the middle of the street for about four hours. An American patrol arrived later and picked up the body. They had to shoot the body several times before going near because they were afraid it was booby-trapped.

I took a photo of the body from a distance as she lay there because I had to document the terrible things happening in this unfortunate country.

One gunman—he couldn't have been over 18—leapt out of the car and dragged the bewildered woman out of the taxi. He put a black plastic bag on her head as she kicked and screamed, and then he shot her.

Two weeks later, rival sectarian militias started firing mortar shells indiscriminately against my neighborhood. Over 50 shells were fired. I was in my room that night perusing the internet when I heard an ear-shattering blast. Dust clouded my room immediately, and I was shocked, trying to grasp what had just happened. Then, I heard the voice of my mum from downstairs, "Nabil! Nabil! Are you OK?" I rushed down to my parents and everyone was fine.

Meanwhile, we heard people in the street, saying that a mortar shell hit a store that is owned by a friend of mine.

We went outside, but it was too dark to see. There was no electric power. A few neighbors had flashlights, and one of them passed our house, stopped and shouted to us, "Here. Here it is. It fell here. Here is the blast." There was a gaping hole on the street just outside our front door. We were lucky.

Just a few weeks ago, there was a car-bomb explosion about 20 meters away from our house, close to where the hairdresser was killed. The car blew up when an American army patrol was passing by. Fortunately, there were no injuries among American troops or residents of our street, but all phone and electricity lines were cut off, and our neighborhood has been without electricity since. I was sleeping when this explosion took place. My bedroom windows were shattered and I woke up with shock. I went downstairs to check on my parents, and there was broken glass and dust everywhere in the house. All our windows were destroyed. Rumor in the neighborhood was that the car bomb was planted there by strangers, just minutes before the explosion.

Just recently, I was about to go out to school one morning, when I saw masked gunmen pasting posters, photos, and statements on store windows on our street. The posters, signed by Ansar al-Sunna, an insurgent group, warned Sunni college students and professors from going to their schools to avoid being targets for abduction or assassination by Shia militiamen and death squads. One statement said that they canceled this academic year in all universities, institutes, and private colleges in Baghdad until they've been "cleaned" of the death squads. Just days after the posters were distributed, suicide bombers attacked Mustansiriya University, killing and wounding dozens of students.

Since then, I have tried to avoid going to school as much as possible. But I don't have much of a choice. If I cannot leave the country, then I have to go on with my life or die from fear.

NABIL KASIM

Nabil is a 20-year-old student in Baghdad and is the author of nabilsblog.blogspot.com

LITTLE IRAQ

The Kids Are Not Quite Alright

I have two cousins that live in Iraq. Sara is 15 years old and Dani is 13. They both live in the al-Yarmouk district of Baghdad, which locals have christened "the streets of death" due to the constant attacks and random violence that plagues the area. So they live in the epicenter of the war, basically. What was once a prosperous middle-class area has become a semideserted pile of carcasses. With this in mind, I called them up to see how they were doing.

Vice: How has your life changed since the Americans arrived?
Sara: Well every morning I used to be picked up by the school bus, which stops outside our house in the morning. It's only a 15-minute walk but it isn't safe. These days I'm not going to school anymore at all.

Why not?
Dani: It's not safe. Last time I went to school, hardly any of the other students were there. Eventually, less and less people started turning up. Everyone is scared that they will be killed accidentally or held for ransom.

Back before the Americans came, getting around this area was much easier. You could go home with friends, or if your school was close you could walk by yourself. Now everything has to be planned. You can't just go home with friends or walk around. We only go out if we really need to.

What about you, Sara?
Sara: Before the invasion, I attended Baghdad's School for Music and Ballet. I had to leave soon after all the sectarian violence started. My family got scared because I was about to be 14 and they thought something might happen to me. A lot of people think dancing is *haram*. That means unholy and not allowed by God. This was very painful for me because I loved dancing and doing it in your house isn't the same. I had to start going to normal school.
Dani: These people have taken a lot from us.

Sometimes when you are walking on the street or in a car, you will see a car pull up to someone and men will get out and bundle him in.

Sara: Almost everything.

Who do you blame?
Sara: The Americans. We thought they were going to free us from the militias and all the people who are doing the killing. It's disgusting to abuse your own people for money and power but now we are used to it. Saddam abused us and now our own people are abusing each other.

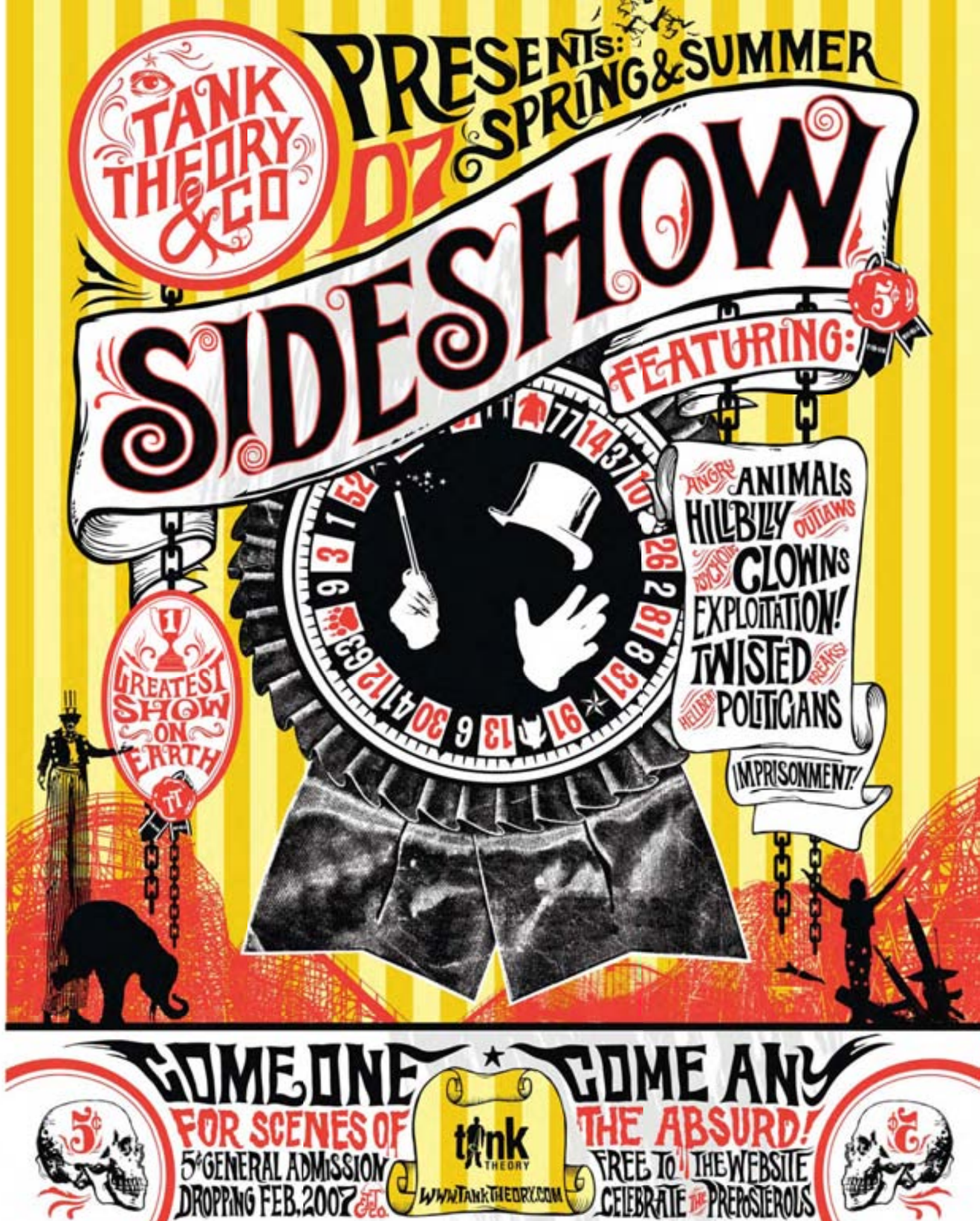
Do you miss normal life?
Sara: I miss my friends
Dani: Me too. It's difficult to see anybody outside school.

Do you think that the amount of people being abducted is exaggerated, and some of the things you hear are just rumors generated by fear?
Sara: No, not at all. Everyone knows someone who has been held ransom by a militia. Kidnappings are commonplace. Sometimes when you are walking on the street or in a car, you will see a car pull up to someone and men will get out and bundle him in. You can't say or do anything because they will kill you.

A few months ago, a girl at my school was snatched from her father as they went home. She was 13. I didn't know her and I wasn't at school when it happened, but the next day everyone was talking about how her father was on the ground, begging and pleading with them to *give her back, and they wouldn't*. These armed gunmen shoved her in the car and demanded a ransom of $2,000. That's a lot of money now.

Do you know if they gave her back?
Sara: Yeah, three days later her father paid the ransom. She was unharmed, but that isn't always the case. I didn't see her at school again.

So when you were at school were you ever



scared that you were going to be bombed?
Dani: Of course. We know in Baghdad that when we leave the house there is a big chance we won't return home alive.
Sara: A few bombs have blown up near my school.

What happened?
Sara: Two were car bombs. The other was a huge explosion on an office block near by.

Was anyone harmed at your school?
Sara: The last explosion caused all the windows to shatter and fall in on us. It was so loud and powerful that it made the building we were in shake. Everyone was screaming, crying, and jumping under their desks. But I was laughing.

Why?
Sara: Because it was exciting. I couldn't help it. I was screaming but not like the rest of them. It was fun. I was jumping around after it happened. Everyone was crying.

So it's fun to get bombed?
Sara: No, I don't mean it like that. It was fun like when you go on a roller coaster.

Have you ever even been on a roller coaster?
Sara: No. I've seen it on film. I would really like to go on a roller coaster. I think it's probably the same feeling as the bomb. I want to do a bungee jump as well. My uncle did it in England a few years ago and gave me a tape of it.

Dani, have you ever been close to an explosion?
Dani: Yes, lots of times.

What happened?
Dani: A month ago I was very lucky I wasn't injured. I was at my friend Hassan's house. The Americans were outside on the streets standing around. Hassan's older cousin told us to take some drinks out to them because it was so hot. Earlier on that day, Hassan and I climbed a tree and were throwing unripe dates at two of the soldiers. It was so funny because it took them so long to work out where it was coming from. It was our fault we got caught. We couldn't stop laughing and one of them heard us as we scrambled down the trunk.

What did he do?
Dani: He ran after us.

For throwing dates at them?
Dani: He was just playing. It doesn't matter. That's not the story anyway. When we took the drinks out to them, Hassan and I wanted to take his cousin's dog out with us. Then there was a loud bang where six Americans were standing down the road from us. One was on the ground. Hassan and I ran toward the house. At this point grenades were falling behind us. That was scary as hell and I really thought I was going to die. I wanted to scream but something just came over me, and we just ran. I was surprisingly calm. I'd never run so fast before that, but I have since. These attacks are getting closer and closer. As we ran we heard a car bomb go off. The militia had surrounded the Americans with the car bomb and the grenades. The fighting lasted for an hour.

I wanted to scream but something just came over me, and we just ran. I was surprisingly calm. I'd never run so fast before that, but I have since.

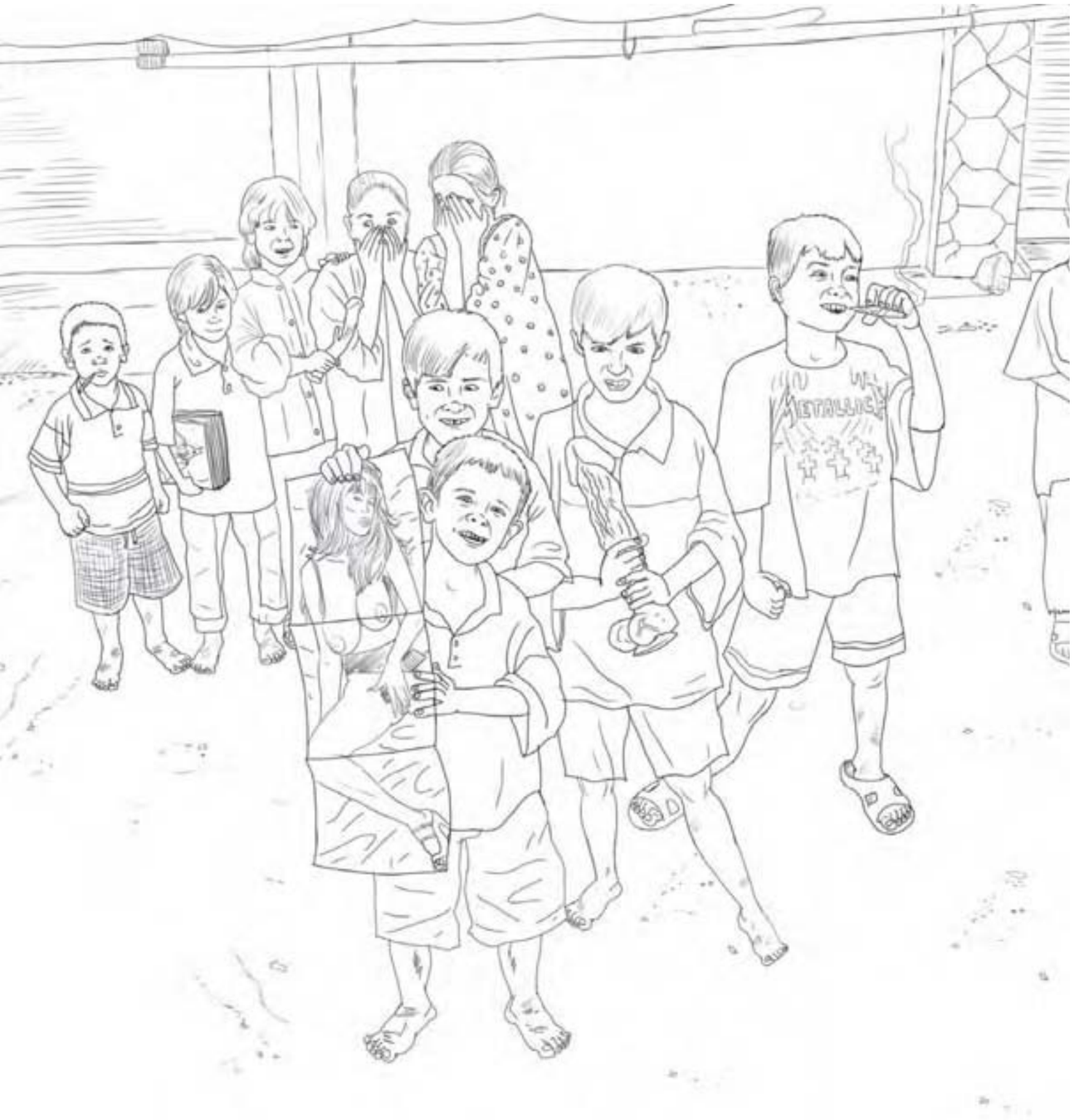
So now that you don't go to school, what do you do all day?
Sara: I still have to study like I would if I were at school. My mum and dad make me.
Dani: Yeah, me too. I study and maybe have a nap in the afternoon because it gets so hot. Sometimes I play football.

When was the last time you guys went to a party or something?
Sara: I can't remember. It's been so long since I've seen my school friends, let alone gone to a party.
Dani: I went to a party a month ago. It was a girl in my class's 14th birthday. I only went because my friend likes her. It wasn't a real party though. There was some music and a bit of dancing, but not like before. You can tell all the parents are on edge and really scared. They all stayed at the house with us because they were too frightened to leave their children.

What were parties in Baghdad like before the war?
Dani: Not all of the parents would stay, and you could do what you wanted. We would put on loud music and have water fights and run around the streets.
Sara: Birthday parties used to be really special occasions. Everyone would get dressed up in their best clothes and go to a restaurant and then maybe do karaoke.

So are you guys going to stay in Iraq?
Sara: No. We are leaving Iraq. This situation is death. Every day a neighbour or someone we know is forced to leave their homes by the militia. It will probably happen to us if we stay.
Dani: I'm really sad to leave, but there is no other choice.

INTERVIEWED BY ZEENA ZAKARIA



SHHHHH!

(The Vice *Guide to Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll in Iraq)*

TEXT BY FAREED ABAS ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTY KARACAS

"Sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll" is a Western concept. In Iraq, it's more about the lack of these things. Nightclubs don't exist, sex is sacred and private, and you'd have a better chance seeing two people making out in the street than you would of finding drugs being sold. Even if you spent your whole life in Iraq like me, you might never see these things.

Iraqis are a very friendly, conservative people, and are quite pleased with their way of life. These aren't things to be proud of. But, if you must know, here you have it.

SEX

Teenagers mostly stick to phone sex but other than that, it's pretty much like anywhere in the world: People have sex.

Iraqi women are known to be some of the most promiscuous in the Middle East. One joke is that Iraqi women's tits hang low because Iraqi men yank on them during sex. Another thing we have is the *eche*, the older woman who is easy to lay. I think in American you call this a "cougar." Many Iraqi men prize the eche, even though she doesn't look so good, because she is easy to land.

But like everything in Iraq, it's complicated. On the one hand, there is the woman in the Palestine Hotel who wears a leopard-print bodysuit and pleasures soldiers in the bathrooms. On the other, a woman can be kidnapped, tortured, and raped for wearing a pair of jeans. It's a toss-up.

Under Saddam it was a lot more secular. Women would wear miniskirts, no problem. But now everyone fears the power of the religious groups. Women want to wear burkas and appear pious so they won't be a target. If a woman dressed in Western-style clothes was raped, everyone would say she brought it on herself.

Gay men actually have it better than women, but that's not saying much. Because there is a lot of kissing on the cheek and facial hair plucking, it is hard to tell who is gay and who is just cosmopolitan and stylish. There are many rumors of famous Iraqi actors being gay, and gayness is joked about, but if you were found out by the wrong people, it would likely lead to a quick death. I have no idea where gays meet each other.

DRUGS

Drugs in Iraq? Are you crazy? We're a very conservative and religious society. Almost nobody does street drugs. Getting high in Iraq is more about pharmaceuticals. The preferred drug is Rivotril (the same thing as Klonopin), which is prescribed for epilepsy. It's called *abu issaleeb*, which means "the one with the cross." This is because the pill is shaped like a cross to make it easier to break into smaller doses.

Valium is another popular choice. Ex-soldiers say almost everybody in the army took Valium during the Iran-Iraq War in the 80s to make them numb so they could go into the battlefield, or sometimes just to sleep. One of my friends took the pills regularly, and he said it helped him be less scared and made him somewhat careless to the fact that death was so close.

Then there is alcohol. People used to sell it on the street out of coolers, but militias started shooting them on sight. Still, hard liquor is always served in certain restaurants, where they camouflage it by serving it in juice bottles or in dark glasses that hide its contents. The most famous hard liquor in Iraq is arag. It is basically diluted ethyl.

The world of street drugs, I don't know too much about. There is hash and there is opium, but my friends and I never did it. I witnessed one of my friends take LSD—some American journalist gave it to him on his last night in Baghdad. He was crazy for a day or so, and is even a little different now, afterward.

Lastly, you have glue-sniffing. You are not an Iraqi street kid if you do not carry a gasoline- or glue-soaked rag under your nose.

ROCK 'N' ROLL

When Iraqis first heard Black Sabbath they went crazy for the music. Heavy metal got very big. In the 80s, American metal bands would occasionally come play in Baghdad, and Iraqi headbangers would ride to concerts on their Harleys, wearing leather and chains and long feathered hair just like metalheads in the US.

But after the war with the US in 1991, all American music was banned, and you could be jailed or killed if you were found listening to it. In 2002, the government started allowing rock cassettes and CDs back into the country for some reason, and there is still a small group of metalheads here. But now it's getting dangerous again to be caught with anything considered Western.

There is really no Iraqi equivalent of rock or dance music. The concept of a nightclub doesn't really exist either. Iraqi music is sad most of the time. It's based on the sad melodies of the oud (which is kind of like a lute) and sometimes incorporates drums that you play using your hands and fingers.

One of the best Iraqi singers and probably the most famous one is Kathum Al-Sahir. He uses a full orchestra and is considered the ambassador of Iraqi song. The most famous Iraqi oud player is Naseer Shamma. He's very famous in the Arab world too.

Iraqis use *mawwal* a lot in their songs, which are traditional poems in Iraqi dialect that usually precede songs to serve as an opening and also to demonstrate the abilities of the singer. These parts of the songs are just about the voice conveying feeling and are combined with either low or no music. You can't really dance to it.

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Photo by Kevin Smith

IRAQ FROM أ TO ي

The Vice *Guide*

Iraq is more than just exploding bodies, bloodthirsty zealots, and confused American soldiers. It's also got spicy meat soups and raisin-juice, verdant rose bushes, and centuries of culture and tradition. Here's our guide to Iraq from Alif to Yaa'.

أ ALIF IS FOR AHWAR

Ahwar is the name of the marshlands in the southern part of Iraq. The people there have lived the same way for thousands of years and are among the few remaining ancient cultures on earth. To this day they live in huts made of braided reeds surrounded by water buffalo. Saddam made life hell for them by building a dam that dried up their territory. Now that Saddam's gone and the water's back they have sectarian death squads, cancer, and jumpy military folk to keep them busy.

ب BAA' IS FOR BAGHDAD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

If you are a teenager, have a car, and are looking for a girl to go out with on a date, Baghdad High School for Girls is the place to go. Placed in a very fancy neighborhood, this school teaches the daughters of some of the richest families in Baghdad. This should be obvious from the luxury cars with drivers waiting in the parking lot outside the front door at any time of the school day. Unfortunately, there are policemen protecting the girls from being harassed. You have to be very charming and have a very fancy car to outsmart the police—pretend to be a sibling and pick up the girl as quickly as you can before they notice, or you'll be in trouble.

ت TAA' IS FOR TEA TIME

Undecided about where to go out for the weekend with friends? There is always the old standby Tea Time. Established in the mid-90s in the rich Harthiya neighborhood, this fast-food restaurant serves enormous sandwiches. Their burgers are so huge that they make the Big Mac look like a White Castle slider. Tea Time has been slowly extending its property for the past few years and now owns the entire two-story building in which it was once-upon-a-time renting a small shop. Iraq is still free from all the American junk-food restaurants at this point—most Iraqis believe that if a Burger King were to open in Baghdad, it'd still lose business against the local fast-food chains.

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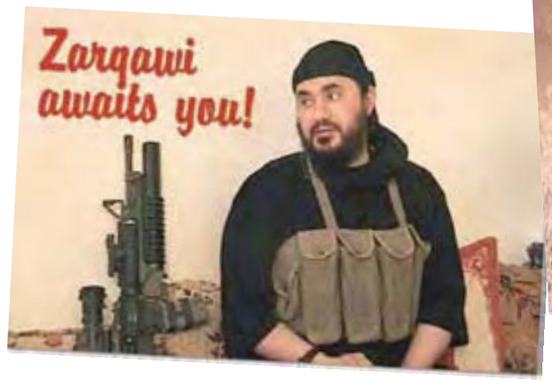

Zarqawi photo by AP, Khandaq photo by Reuters

ث THAA' IS FOR THIREED

Thireed was originally a Bedouin meal but flourished and became very popular in Iraq. It consists mainly of bread dipped in meat soup and huge chunks of meat. Iraqis are so into meat they even eat kebabs at breakfast, and this is like the Iraqi Rib-Eye Steak Dish.

ج JEEM IS FOR JADIRIYA CLUB (NADI AL-JADIRIYA)

Jadiriya Club is the top social club of high-aristocratic families in Iraq. Uday Hussein originally founded it in the early 90s as a horseback-riding club for his fellow equestrians, but the beautiful gardens, brilliant scenery, and nice settings began to attract all the rich families in Iraq. These families tend to have a very Westernized lifestyle, and it became normal to see daughters and sons of different families dating, partying, or going on boat rides in the river Dijlah. After the war, the Jadiriya club was taken over and now serves as a military base.

ه HAA' IS FOR HAJJI ZBALA (OLD MAN GARBAGE)

A small cafeteria in Baghdad that opened in 1901 and is named for its owner, Mr. Zbala (that's the Arabic word for "garbage"). His parents named him "Garbage" at a time when some superstitious Iraqis would also give their kids names like "Donkey" or "Piss" to ward off the evil eye. This obviously worked for little Zbala, as it sealed his destiny as the most popular raisin-juice-shop owner in Iraq. It was the photo-op place of choice for Iraqi political figures over the past century.

خ KHAA' IS FOR KHANDAQ

A *khandaq* is what you dig to hide in in hope of saving your life during bombing. It's a shelter. When the war was close, people started to prepare themselves and their houses. They stored food, first aid, and all sorts of fuel and money for emergencies. A lot of people dug wells in their houses, but some people dug a khandaq too. A lot of stories of the older men that participated in the Iran-Iraq War are about things they did in their khandaq during the war. Iraqis, living through long years and having experienced many wars, consider the khandaq an essential part of their lives.

د DAAL IS FOR DIJLAH

Dijlah, or what you know as the Tigris, is the river that runs through Iraq, north to south coming from Turkey. It meets up with the Euphrates River right by Basra. Iraqis have romanticized this river in poems, songs, paintings, and books for its beauty. Nowadays it's just a good place to dump dead bodies.

ذ THAAL IS FOR THIBEEHA

Iraq is well known for the hospitality of its people. When an important guest visits, you have to give them a *thibeeha*, or an offering. You slaughter some of the sheep you have if you are in a tribal area or a village, or just get them from a restaurant if you are in a city. Thibeeha is also given at weddings and funerals. If an important figure dies, like a head of a tribe, literally hundreds and even thousands of sheep are slaughtered to make food for the visitors coming from all over the country to pay their respects and express their condolences.

ر RAA' IS FOR RASHEED STREET

This posh street is located in one of the affluent areas of Baghdad. It used to be frequented by young college students who would hang out at famous restaurants serving different types of food. Rasheed was also teeming with fashion shops, which drew a considerable number of women shoppers. No one goes here anymore. There's no point.

ز ZAAI IS FOR ZARQAWI

The name that has literally shaken the streets of Iraq with car bombs and drenched it with innocent blood. He was to blame for terrorizing the whole country, driving a wedge between Iraqi countrymen, and turning the people's lives into waking nightmares. Though he's officially dead, the scars he caused are still fresh and painful. A lot of people believe that he isn't responsible for attacks against civilians and was only attacking the American army. A lot of people believe that his role was overexaggerated by the media and used as a political card by many sides. Just like a lot of other things in Iraq today, nobody knows for sure what the truth is.

س SEEN IS FOR SA'AH RESTAURANT

Sa'ah is a very famous Iraqi restaurant. A lot of foreigners even know it because it was in the news many times during

Upper Playground Worldwide
Kingston, Jamaica
Photo by Benjamin Belsky
upperplayground.com

Photos by AP

the war. Saddam was believed to be hiding in a house behind it, so the American army dropped a ton of bombs on it, which turned the house into a big hole in the ground and damaged the crap out of all the surrounding buildings. It was rebuilt later. The restaurant is in the Mansour neighborhood and is still running although many car bombs have exploded near it since the start of the war. Like all Iraqis, this restaurant is a survivor.

ش SHEEN IS FOR SHAY

In Iraqi it's pronounced *chay*, (the "ch" sound is common in the Iraqi dialect but has no equivalent in the Arabic alphabet). This tea is so mean it makes black coffee look gay. It's brewed for hours with a ton of cardamom, it's dark as death, and it is consumed with piles of sugar. This is the drink of choice for all Iraqis. They drink it all day long at home, at work, and in public. Today if you see an Iraqi in the street who isn't nursing a cup of shay, he's probably about to reach for an RPG.

ص SAAD IS FOR SAYD CLUB (NADI IL SAYD)

Sayd Club is one of the most famous social clubs in Baghdad. It's the place where families would get together to spend an evening and have dinner, or children would go during the day to swim or play basketball or tennis. Uday, Saddam's son, used to go there a lot too, but as long as you stayed away from him and minded your own business, you'd generally be fine.

ذ DHAAD IS FOR DHARBA (ATTACK)

The 1991 war on Iraq is often referred to by local Iraqis as "the Bush's Dharba". After a number of attacks ensued people started tagging on numbers to distinguish them: the First Dharba and the Second Dharba, and so on. There were smaller dharbas in between too, during the 90s. People used to use "the Dharba" as a reference for time, like: "I started working two years after the Dharba." Now when you say "the Dharba" everyone's like, "Which one?"

ط TAH IS FOR TAREEQ IL MATAR (AIRPORT ROAD)

I used to live very close to the airport. Practically the entire war happened around us as we were surrounded by the airport, the national security college, and the presidential warehouses. I can't possibly count how many thousands of rockets and missiles went over our heads. The airport road, which we used to take every day to go home, was one of the most beautiful in Baghdad. It's very wide and was decorated with flowers, bushes, and tall palm trees. Since the American army used the airport as a base, they were being targeted daily on that road with roadside bombs, car bombs, and RPG attacks—all of which left the street full of holes. Eventually the American army had to remove and burn all the trees and bushes to make sure nobody was hiding among them to attack them.

ظ DHA IS FOR DHILAL

Al-Dhilal is a bus company that was once one of the most important means of transportation between Iraq and Jordan. Before the current war, as part of the sanctions, no airplanes were allowed to fly over Iraq. People had to use the desert highway to go to Jordan. It was a 1,000-kilometer trip, and it could take as much as a good 24 hours on the road to make it due to delays at the border. Also, because of the bad security situation, people sometimes prefer to use buses instead of the charter SUVs that started to operate on that road a couple of years before the war. It's safer to be with 40 people because you're less likely to be hijacked or attacked on your way out of Iraq.

ع AIN IS FOR 'ASHURAA

This is a Shia religious festival that was banned under Saddam Hussein's reign. Shia get together once a year and put on a blood-soaked parade where men and boys chant and cut and beat themselves with chains as a reminder of their atrocious past. The Sunni/Shia split originated in southern Iraq a few hundred years after the prophet Mohammed died. At the time, the people of Karbala murdered and mutilated the prophet's grandson Hussein. 'Ashuraa shows that the Shia are still not over it. It's also practiced in Bahrain, Iran, and Lebanon.

غ GHAIN IS FOR KING GHAZI

The gay (and only) son of Iraq's first king, Faisal I, this little prince was crowned at age 21 when his dad kicked the bucket in 1933. He took his hatred of the British (who had pulled the strings throughout his father's rule) to its natural conclusion by buddying up with the Nazis, and helped support the Arab world's first military coup d'état—against his own government.

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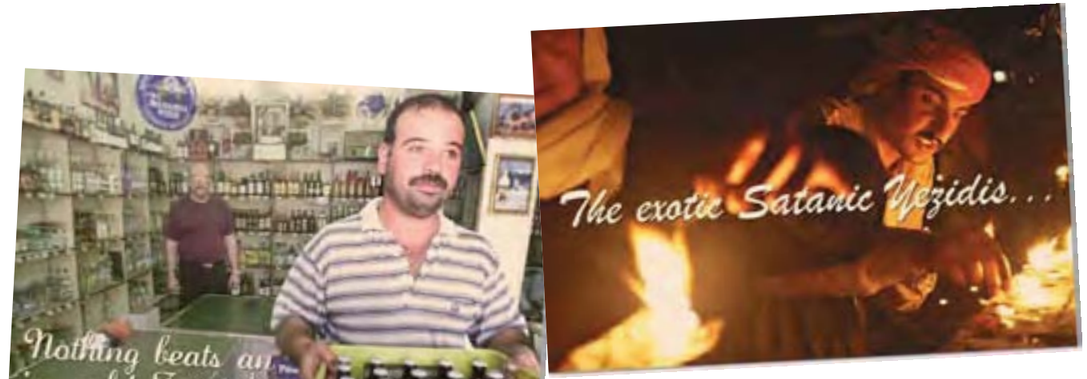

Ferida photo by Reuters, Yezidis photo by AP

Much to the nation's relief, he died in a suspicious sports car crash only six years into his reign.

ف FAA' IS FOR FERIDA

Ferida is a girl's name. For some reason the names of the three brands of Iraqi beer are all girls' names. *Ferida* means "unique" in Arabic, and she meets the requirement of a lot of Iraqi men: Available, strong, and cheap.

ق QAAF IS FOR QOOZI

Qoozi is a badass traditional Iraqi dish. It's basically a mountain of rice prepared with a mix of spices that give it a funky taste and brownish color and is usually served with a whole roasted lamb on top. It's the mother of all indigestion-causing meals. Qoozi is what people make for weddings and other important occasions. When my family used to invite people over and make qoozi, we planned it assuming that each guest would eat a good pound of meat and some two heaping plates of rice.

ك KAAF IS FOR KATHUM AL-SAHIR

Al-Sahir is a famous contemporary Iraqi crooner and sex symbol known for his trademark wailing-style singing. Kathum fled Baghdad after getting sick and tired of having to write songs about Saddam. He's one of the biggest celebrities in the Middle East. He cut a track with Lenny Kravitz in 2003, but it bombed. He loves Baghdad and sings about it all the time.

ل LAAM IS FOR LAHAM

Laham is Arabic for "meat." Iraqi lamb is the best of the lot. That's why sheep smuggling has become a lucrative business for some people in neighboring Iran and Saudi Arabia. The fact that most Iraqis cannot live without meat has allowed greedy butchers to keep making their products' prices higher and higher. Iraqis eat meat at two or even sometimes three of the daily meals. All meat in Iraq is organic and thus incredibly tasty. Sheep and cow are very popular, but some people also like camel's meat. And you can forget about pork.

م MEEM IS FOR MUTHAFAR AL-NAWWAB

This guy's a legendary communist rebel poet, famous across the Middle East for his dramatic and political writing. In the early 70s he was invited to recite his poetry at an Arab League meeting, at which he proceeded to curse and swear at every head of state present in the room. His comrades had to quickly smuggle him out of the country and he now lives in Syria. He's also a renowned drunk.

ن NOON IS FOR NABUG

The dictionary says the English equivalent for this round-shaped fruit is "Christ's thorn." To Iraqis, it's all kids' favorite fruit. If you see a bunch of little Iraqis gathering around a tree and hurling stones, sticks, and sometimes shoes, you know it's a *nabug* tree. Though it stinks like smelly socks, it's delicious. A spooky myth is linked to this tree—they say if a house has one in its yard and the owners intentionally chop it down, a family member will croak soon.

ح HAA' IS FOR HUMMER

These boxy US military vehicles have become an inbuilt part of post-invasion Iraqi culture. When a fleet of Hummers passes by any Iraqi street, people tend to keep a distance, lest they are shot at by the jumpy American soldiers inside. The sight of a Hummer in any neighborhood means trouble. If Americans are attacked, all hell breaks loose in the shape of detentions and random gunfire. To Iraqi children in more rundown areas, Hummers means US-made candy bars from less aggressive soldiers.

و WAW IS FOR WARD JOORI

These bright-colored Iraqi roses look as nice as they smell. Iraqis are fond of gardening and ward joori really brighten the landscape. In springtime, schoolgirls like to pick red, pink, and white flowers to give to their teachers as a token of respect.

ي YAA' IS FOR YEZIDIS

The Yezidis are an ancient Iraqi devil-worshipping sect. Originally from northern Iraq, they bow down to Melek Ta'us (the Peacock Angel) whom they also call Shaytan (Satan). Melek Ta'us is basically Lucifer except the Yezidi side of the story of creation says that God gave Lucifer props and a camp peacock outfit for defying his orders.

MINO JIBILLA

"I'm in the US army and I was in Iraq from April 2005 to January 2006 training the Iraqi army and police. I met this kid in the northern Iraqi town of Avgani. He's wearing an Iraqi army helmet from one of the soldiers with us. We were doing a presence patrol in town, talking with the locals." Photo by Kevin Smith.

VICE PICS

In this photo, an Iraqi soldier is leaving a house after having searched it for weapons in a joint operation of the 213th Battalion of the Iraqi army and American soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armored Regiment out of Fort Riley, Kansas. This photo is from the book Iraq *by Christoph Bangert (powerHouse, fall 2007).*

"This photo was taken at 4 AM. These guys are my local neighborhood watch and they came to say hi to me by emptying their guns in front of my house at 2:30 AM. We started a BBQ immediately and then got really drunk." Photo by Yobert Younan. See more at www.2yphotography.com.

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AFTER THE BATTLE, A FEAST

An Iraqi Menu

PHOTOS BY NAWAL NASRALLAH

BROWNED EGGPLANT WITH YOGURT (MSAQUA'AT BETINJAN B 'L-LIBAN)

(Makes 4 to 6 servings)

1 large eggplant (about 1 1/2 pounds)
Oil for brushing
1 cup yogurt
1 garlic clove, grated
Salt
For garnish: Chile pepper, chopped parsley, sliced tomato

1. Wash eggplant, cut off stem, and peel it into strips. Cut crosswise into two parts and then cut each lengthwise into slices.
2. Soak eggplant pieces in warm salted water for about half an hour. Put a heavy plate on the pieces to keep them submerged.
3. Drain eggplant pieces. Generously brush a cookie sheet with oil (such as corn oil or light olive oil). Arrange eggplant pieces in a single layer. Generously brush them with oil, and broil them until nicely browned, turning once to allow other side to brown, too. Broil for about ten minutes (traditionally eggplant is fried in oil).
4. Stir together yogurt, garlic, and salt.
5. On a big platter, arrange eggplant pieces (they may overlap). Spoon yogurt mixture over the eggplant. Sprinkle with chile and garnish with parsley and tomato. Serve with warm bread.

Note: If the amount is more than you can consume in one sitting, refrigerate eggplant pieces and yogurt in two separate containers. Combine and garnish just before serving.

GOLD AND WHITE RICE PUDDING (ZARDA WA HALEEB)

(Makes 4 serving plates)

Note: You need to cook both parts simultaneously.

The white part:
Rice, washed, soaked in water for 30 minutes, and drained
3 cups water
1/4 teaspoon salt

2 cups milk
Sugar
1 tablespoon rose water
1 teaspoon cardamom

1. Put rice, water, and salt in a medium heavy pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and let simmer for 15 to 20 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Stir two to three times while simmering.
2. Add milk and sugar and let it simmer gently, stirring occasionally until pudding is of medium consistency, for 15 to 20 minutes. Add rose water and cardamom.

The yellow part:
1/2 cup rice, washed, soaked in water for 30 minutes, and drained
6 cups water
1/4 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon saffron, steeped in a little hot water
Cornstarch dissolved in 1/2 cup cold water
1 cup sugar
1 to 2 tablespoons rose water
For garnish: Ground cinnamon

1. Put rice, water, and salt in a medium heavy pot. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, and let it cook gently until rice is thoroughly done, 20 to 25 minutes.
2. Add the steeped saffron, dissolved cornstarch, and sugar, stir well, and resume cooking gently on medium heat. Stir occasionally until pudding is of medium consistency, about 15 minutes. Add rose water.
3. To assemble the dish: Fill a flattish plate half with the white rice pudding and half with the yellow saffron pudding. Decorate with ground cinnamon.

DATE SYRUP AND TAHINI DIP (DIBIS WA RASHI)

Date syrup (available at Middle Eastern stores)
1/3 cup tahini

Put the date syrup in a nice flattish bowl and drizzle the tahini on it. Fold them lightly with a spoon, just enough to create a marbled look.

Serve it as a sweet dip, with bread.

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THIRD ASS FROM THE RIGHT

Iraqi Humor Is No Laughing Matter

TEXT BY ZEYAD KASIM ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHNNY RYAN

Iraqis, after living for decades under an oppressive totalitarian regime in which one offhand remark could ensure a quick trip to the gallows, have mastered the art of the whispered political riff. In a way, secretly traded Saddam jokes provided the only means to retaliate against the motherfucker. The jokes proliferated so fast, it was rumored the Mukhabarat (Iraq's fearsome intelligence service) had a special branch just to keep up with them.

Post-war jokes in Iraq continue in the same tradition, just substituting US and coalition soldiers for Saddam and his sons. Take this, for example:

An American soldier was harassing an Iraqi girl on the street. She turned to him and said, "Get lost... Or I'll turn you into a newsflash."

Another joke, poking fun at the insurgents of Fallujah in early 2004 and their anti-Shia bias, goes like this:

An American soldier who trained Iraqi security forces watches as they capture a militant in action. "By Hussein, let me go!" he pleads to the soldier and they release him. Confused, the American asks the Iraqis why they let the suspect go. They tell him that Hussein is a Shia Muslim saint and they can't turn down a request made in his name. Days later, the American soldier is captured by Sunni insurgents in Fallujah and while they interrogate him, he shouts, "By Hussein, let me go!" They look at each other in surprise and their leader says, "He's not just an American, but worse, he's a Shia American. Finish him off!"

The Kurds of northern Iraq serve the same purpose that Polacks do to the rest of the world. Any Polish joke you know can be translated into a gut-busting Kurd joke, lickety split. Kurd jokes grew even more in popularity during the current war, especially after Kurdish leader Jalal Talibani was appointed Iraqi president:

Why does Jalal Talibani salute the air conditioner every time he gets up in the morning? Because it's a GENERAL Electric.

While Kurdish jokes are considered extremely offensive by the country's second largest ethnic group, they persist nevertheless. Comedy needs victims. Here are some of the most popular:

A Kurdish terrorist is captured, and US interrogators question him about his last operation. "The last one I had was for a hernia," he says.

A Kurd goes to Zarqawi and requests to commit a suicide attack. Zarqawi equips him with an explosive belt and a cell phone and asks him to call when he finds a large enough crowd. The Kurd goes out to the street and finds five people near a store. He calls. "I found five people. Do I commit suicide now?" "No, no, you fool," says Zarqawi from the other side of the line. "Find a larger crowd. Go to a market or something." The Kurd walks up to a crowded market and calls again, "OK, I'm in the middle of 100 people. Do I commit suicide now?" Zarqawi: "Yes! What are you waiting for?" The Kurd puts the cell phone in his pocket, pulls out a knife, and stabs himself.

The movement of young Shia firebrand cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr has been the topic of countless vulgar jokes. This isn't so much a mystery if you know that his family name, Sadr, in Arabic, means "breast" or "chest."

George Bush and Bill Clinton are discussing how to solve the Iraqi situation. Clinton says, "Do it the same as I did with Monica: Grab Al-Sadr."

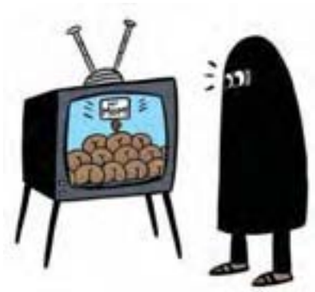
Another group that often finds itself the target of jokes is the powerful rural tribe of Dulaim, in western Iraq. They are sort of the Iraq equivalent of hillbillies: Naïve yet extremely generous landowners and farmers:

A Dulaimi was invited to a birthday party and had so much fun that when the party ended, he announced, "Hey everyone, tomorrow's birthday party is on me."

Two Dulaimis are playing chess. "I killed your horse," one of them boasts. The other goes out and returns after a few minutes. "And I poisoned all your cows."

During the 90s it was rumored that, in response to the spread of Dulaim jokes, their tribal leader visited Saddam Hussein and indignantly threw his headgear on the floor—an old tribal gesture that means the subject feels dishonored. Dulaim jokes were banned afterward. The Dulaim are also known now for their opposition to the US occupation of Iraq and their support for the insurgency, and so the jokes have changed accordingly.

A Dulaimi is relaxing with his wife at their home and they suddenly hear American jets bombarding their area. "Lie down, quick!" he yells at her. She angrily responds, "Do you think this is the right time for this?"



A Dulaim man, recently released from Abu Ghraib, returns home and asks his mother, "Did you see me on TV? I'm the third ass from the right."

Every now and then a joke brings Kurds and Dulaimi together:

A Kurd and a Dulaimi once played hide and seek in 1980. They're still missing to this day.

Sectarianism has also found its way into Iraqi humor:

Two Iraqi sisters are gossiping with their mother. The first is complaining that her Sunni husband only has intercourse with her in the missionary position, and the second is complaining about her Shia husband who only has intercourse doggy-style. The mother sighs and says, "God have mercy on your father. He never discriminated against Sunni or Shia."

Insurgents are not immune to a bit of ribbing either. One such chuckler goes like this:

Terrorists stopped a bus and started killing everyone inside. One of them reached a woman in the back and a man sitting next to her. He paused and asked her for her name. "Aisha," she said. Terrorist: "I won't kill you then. That's my mother's name." He turned to the man and asked him for his name. "Ahmed," the man responded, "but everyone calls me Aisha."

A virgin wanted to be a suicide bomber after terrorists promised her she could get as many men as she wanted in paradise. She drives her car bomb into a crowded fruit market but the car doesn't explode and she passes out. When she wakes up she finds herself in a pile of bananas and cucumbers. "Slow down!" she screams. "One at a time, please!"

There's also a school of Iraqi jokes comparing us with Americans:

A reporter once asked an Iraqi, an American, and an Afghan about their opinion on electricity outages. The Iraqi asked back, "What's an opinion?" The American asked, "What's an outage?" And the Afghan asked, "What's electricity?"

An Iraqi and an American went to hell. The Iraqi asked to call his family and he paid $1 for the phone call. The American did the same but he was charged $10. "Why do I have to pay more than the Iraqi?" he protested. They told him it was a local call to Baghdad from hell.

Iraq's neighbors have always been kind of disgusted with the Iraqi tradition of really fucked-up, morbid humor. Iraqis explain that it's the only way they can maintain their sanity in the hell they live in. I say let us have our riffs! This last one basically sums it up:

An Iraqi stumbles upon a magic lamp. He starts rubbing it eagerly and the genie comes out with a puff of smoke announcing, "Your wish is my command." "I want you to build me a bridge from Iraq to Canada," the Iraqi demands. "Oh, please," the genie responds. "Can't you ask for something simple? Who can build a bridge from Iraq to Canada? Make another wish." The Iraqi thinks for a moment and says, "OK, then. I want the situation in Iraq to improve." The genie says, "How did you want that bridge again? One-lane or two-lane?"

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IRAQI GIRLS: HOME & AWAY

ZAHRA AL-NAIB, 24

Vice: So you're a Muslim Iraqi living in West London. Would you ever wear this black robe in public?
Zahra: I would wear this if I went to the mosque.

How often do you go?
Girls don't go to the mosque a lot, really. I would like to go as much as other people do but it's more compulsory for guys to go to the mosque and pray than it is for girls. Sometimes it's better that girls are at home doing their daily chores. Guys don't really do the housework.

So what do you normally wear?
I usually wear jeans, boots, or little pumps. I don't really buy fashion magazines but I like to keep up on the latest trends so sometimes I'll look on the internet and see what looks are popular. The other day I saw that the color yellow was popular so I was wearing yellow today!

Does being Muslim influence how you dress at all?
Yes. You have to remember you're a Muslim because if you completely neglect it, there's a danger of falling into the modern-day, Westernized way of dressing. I don't like it when people are too influenced by the media and their circle of friends.

What about how the media influences how people think about Iraq at the moment?
Whenever I see the Iraq coverage on TV I think it's all really sad. I think the media are picking up too much on so-called extremist Muslims. I don't think those people are Muslims because Muslims don't go around killing people.

What people have to understand is that when Saddam was captured, a lot of people said, "We're not going to live by Westerners' rules." And so people have taken it too far by running around with explosives wrapped around their waists, blowing things up. There's mosques being blown up and there are little kids with half their bodies lying over here and half their bodies lying over there. I think it'll only stop when the Westerners leave the country.

PHOTOS BY ALEX STURROCK STYLING BY ALDENE JOHNSON
HAIR & MAKEUP BY LINDA ANDERSSON AT S MANAGEMENT

HOME

AWAY

ZEENA ZAKARIA, 20

Vice: When did you come to London?
Zeena: I moved here from Baghdad when I was seven. My mother and father were doctors there but they decided to leave when things in Iraq started to go bad. This was a few years before the American invasion.

We had to flee the country in secret because if Saddam found out that doctors were leaving the country he'd do something about it. Travel was really limited under Saddam. Sadly, it's probably got even worse since he went.

How did it get worse?
Before the Americans came, Iraq was very much a secular country. There were Muslims, Christians, and Jews all living there. Some people would wear headdresses like the one I'm wearing here but my mother would never wear anything like this.

These days though, with everything how it is, more and more women are wearing full headdresses and *hijabs*. The extremist religious militias are taking advantage of the fact that there's virtually no law any more and so they're attacking people for what they wear. The extremists are both Shia and Sunni and they're all divided up into different groups. It's a total mess. They want to turn the place into a religious state and I think they probably will.

What are you doing here in London?
I'm studying politics but I want to make films. I like going to drum and bass nights and my boyfriend's really into grime.

How do you dress day to day?
I love heels. I'm really short so I want to be tall. I suppose I dress quite slutty really. I like shopping at Top Shop and American Apparel for stuff to wear around the house.

What if you dressed slutty in Iraq right now?
I think I'd be shot. Right now the most popular items of fashion in Baghdad are veils and bulletproof vests.

HOME

AWAY

SAMAR BASROWI, 23

Vice: So where is your family from?
Samar: Basra. My dad was a chauffeur there.

And how does your family feel about what's happening there?
It makes us mad. They're oppressing us in Iraq. Even the Westerners know that now. If you count the ratio of soldiers that have died compared with the amount of innocent civilians that have been killed ruthlessly, it's absolutely disproportionate.

Here's another thing: They think it's OK to kill Saddam but still have a total dictator like George W. Bush in power. It isn't.

If you watch Al Jazeera you see the major contrasts in how the news is communicated here and there. You don't see the real reasons behind all the problems. It's not just Americans vs. Muslims. That's not what it is at all.

What is it?
When Saddam was in power there was a Muslim divide between the Shia and the Sunni, but nothing like the amount of conflict happening now. I think a lot of the extremists of those two sects are actually happy that Saddam was brought down because they can take advantage of the total lawlessness that exists there. The government is useless. The power in the country lies in random militias.

You sound angry.
I see the latest headlines and the latest so-called "breakthroughs" and it makes me physically sick. Whenever I look at the media I know my day is going to be ruined by being exposed to all the stuff that's out there. And you do get the feeling that you can't do anything about it. I try and block it out and it gets me very heated.

How heated?
Sometimes I get into debates with the people I work with at this music licensing company. People's pure ignorance leads to total frustration. And then it's clobbering time.

DALIA DAWOOD, 18

Vice: So your family is from Basra but you all live in London now. Are you planning on visiting Iraq soon?
Dalia: I would love to visit but at the moment it's a bit dangerous.

What do you think is going to happen?
Well, I don't see it calming down. My uncle is there in Basra but it's difficult to get through to him. Their house phone isn't working and we have to call the neighbors. There's a lot of shootings on the road they live on so they find it difficult to leave the house.

When was the last time you spoke to them?
About six or seven months ago. He said conditions were bad. This was around the time when my other uncle Ashraf was shot through the head at his front door because he owned a few buildings and he was letting American soldiers stay in them. Some people saw that as being a traitor.

Do you remember your uncle?
Yes. He used to own an ice cream van and would come over and give us ice creams. He was a really bubbly character. We couldn't go to the funeral in Iraq so we held a service here in London.

Was it a Muslim service?
No. We are Roman Catholic. Before the Americans came to Iraq it wasn't a problem to be Christian there. There were Catholic churches in Iraq.

How does it feel to watch the TV coverage of Iraq?
Al Jazeera is quite brutal. It shows really detailed stuff. It's so disturbing for me I have to get up and walk away.

It's sad to see my home country in the state it's in. I have very few memories of Iraq now and what I see in the media is what I see in my mind. It makes me feel quite upset.

What do you do to cheer yourself up?
I'll go out every now and then with some friends. I like R&B and soul. Justin Timberlake's CD is great. I'm going to see him play in July hopefully!

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I WAS UDAY HUSSEIN

A Stand-In Speaks

The hand that rocks the oil pumps controls the world. Between 1979 and 2003, that hand was Saddam Hussein's. He would also use it to sign death warrants on dissenters, to murder his own countrymen, to plot disastrous wars with neighboring countries, and to be the puppet master of his entire population. In September 1987, Saddam—or more accurately, his son, Uday—picked up my strings. Uday wanted a double, and I was unlucky enough to resemble him.

This was not my first encounter with Uday. Because of my father's wealth I was sent to the best school in Iraq, and a young, spoiled, arrogant Uday became my classmate. We all hated him even then. He would cruise the streets in his cars and, with the assistance of his bodyguards, would pick up girls whether they wanted to go with him or not—and most did not. At least one girl who refused to be taken by him was kidnapped and thrown to his starving dogs. In class he would act like his father, showing no enthusiasm for lessons and acting threateningly toward anyone who crossed him. A teacher who reprimanded him for bringing his girlfriend into class disappeared and was never seen again. My classmates used to tease me and call me Uday because even at that age I resembled him. I used to imitate him for laughs.

When my second encounter with Uday came about, I was a captain on the front in Iraq's pointless war with Iran. My unit's command received a dispatch saying that I should be sent to the presidential palace. I was taken there and informed that I was to become Uday Hussein's *fiday*, or body double. This would involve attending functions, making appearances, and assuming his persona when rumors of assassination were circulating. Saddam had several fidays already, and Uday obviously longed for one just like his daddy. I was to be his first. My initial refusal was met with a long spell of solitary confinement and mental torture in a cramped cell without so much as a toilet to maintain my dignity. Eventually, this treatment, and vile threats against my family, forced me to agree to Uday's demands.

Throughout a lengthy period I was trained to act like him and to speak like him. I was also, through cosmetic surgery, made to look even more like him. Indeed, having my front teeth filed down and being given a set of caps that mimicked Uday's gave me a lisp just like his. I was, during my "training," desensitized to the ugly barbarity of the regime by being forced to watch endless, excruciating videos of real torture, mutilation, and murder perpetrated by them on dozens of men, women, and children of Iraq, usually prisoners or prisoners' family members. These films also served as a warning as to what I could expect were I to decide to challenge the regime at any time in the future.

My first public appearance as Uday was at a football match in Baghdad's People's Stadium. My job was to wave at the crowd from a dignitaries box and present medals to the players at the end. When Uday saw the appearance on television he was impressed. He congratulated my trainers and accepted me as a member of his circle, albeit on the outer reaches. He could not allow anyone to become too close to him, particularly anyone from outside the Tikriti clan from which the majority of the regime was drawn. Indeed, I had been the first fiday to be plucked from the outside world.

I was, during my "training," desensitized to the ugly barbarity of the regime by being forced to watch endless, excruciating videos of real torture, mutilation, and murder...

From then on my days were spent living in his palaces, effectively a prisoner, as I was not allowed to do anything without permission. But it was a prison of opulence and luxury, with access to the finest food and drink the world had to offer. Swimming pools and other such charmed diversions made the time a little more bearable.

But the captivity grew stultifying. Most of the time I would not be making appearances; I would be bored out of my mind, intellectually and socially unchallenged. I had graduated with a degree in law and had dreamed of following in my father's footsteps and becoming a businessman. This had never been part of my master plan. I was living a brainless, useless existence with no independence or exercise of free will. But worse was to come. I got sucked closer to Uday and he started to treat me as one of his bodyguards, taking me out with him as protection against assassination at the hands of any of his multitude of enemies. This is when I witnessed the depravity of Uday firsthand. I saw him rape, murder, bully, and destroy anyone who dared to question his will. This could be anyone from friends of his father to innocent passersby. On one occasion a honeymooning couple, the wife of which Uday took a liking to, was split apart forever when she threw herself to her death from a balcony after being raped by Uday.

I was saved by the beginning of the invasion of the US-led forces, which seemed to give the regime other things to think about. Uday came to visit me one day. He had me shaved from head to toe and dumped on the doorstep of my parents' home. My mother discovered me but did not recognize the bald, skeletal figure at her feet until I spoke to tell her who I was.

I eventually managed to flee to Austria, but Uday was not finished with me. Two of Uday's men arrived at my family's home and told my father that Uday wanted to see him in his office. They said the meeting would not take too long and that they would pick him up and bring him back. The meeting took place in the headquarters of the Iraqi Olympic Committee, the organization led by Uday more as something for him to do than through any interest he might have had in sports. At 4 AM my father was dropped off at home. The family was still awake, terrified that he had been kidnapped, tortured, or murdered. He said he did not feel well, and just sat there in the lounge, obviously in some distress. In time he started to feel dizzy. Everyone assumed he was tired, as the past few hours would have been a serious drain on his physical resources. But his skin was changing color, at first unnoticeably but eventually unmistakably, to a sickly shade of yellow. He eventually keeled over and took his last breath.

A few hours after my father was dropped off, Uday's bodyguards arrived at the house and imposed a no-funeral rule. They told my family simply to put his body in a grave and unceremoniously bury him. They must have known he would be dead by then, which confirmed to anyone in any doubt that he had been deliberately poisoned. Their rationale was that he was killed because he was the father of Latif Yahia, in their view one of the country's greatest criminals, one of its traitors, who was working alongside the CIA to overthrow Saddam.

I continue to blame myself for the death of my father. And I cannot see the day when I will forgive myself. I could have stayed in Iraq and faced the music. Perhaps I would have been the one to accept the orange juice, to have my bones broken, my soul forced through the mangle. Perhaps then my father would have been the one blaming himself—for sending me to the same school as Uday, for being wealthy. Who knows? It is pointless thinking about it. All I knew was that he was the biggest thing in my life—my father, my friend, my teacher, my confidante, a line of continuity in a place where arbitrary acts of violence and mayhem kept its inhabitants in fear and obedience. And now he is gone.

LATIF YAHIA

All photos courtesy of the author

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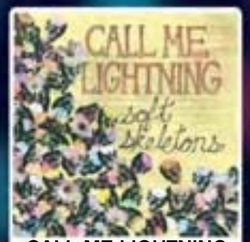

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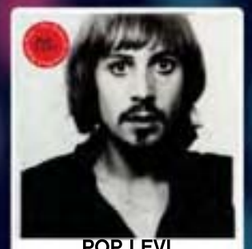
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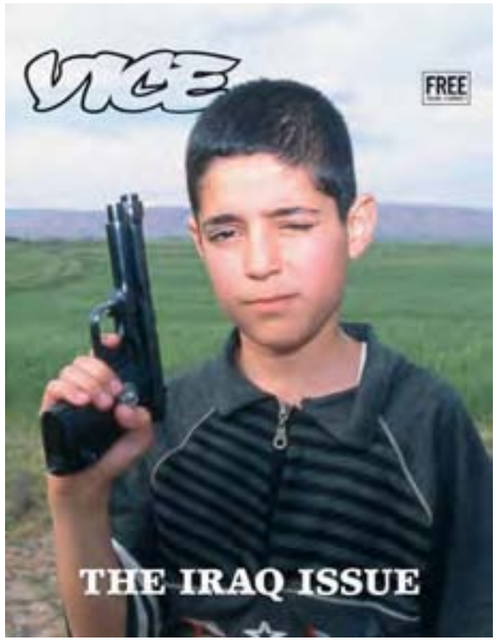

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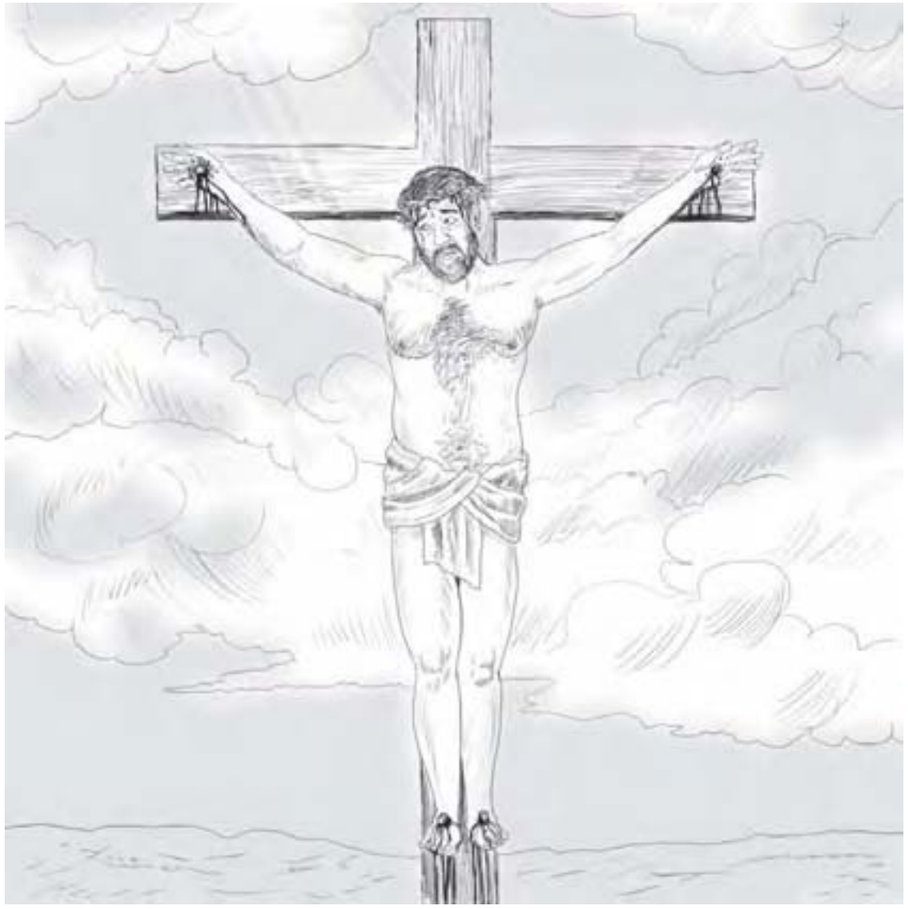

Illustration by Christy Karacas

SADDAM H. CHRIST

A Chat With Hussein's Lawyer

Dr. Najeeb Al-Nuaimi was a lead lawyer on Saddam Hussein's final legal defense team. Al-Nuaimi first came to prominence defending Guantánamo Bay inmates, and recently this renowned human rights activist of the Arab world sat down to talk to us.

Vice: How do you feel now that Saddam has been executed?
Dr. Najeeb Al-Nuaimi: I have to say I was expecting it.

Was Saddam expecting it?
He said, "If death is my destiny, why should I change it?" Unfortunately, Saddam did not want an international trial. He said, "I was born here and I will die here." He did not want to be Milosevic. He wanted to be in Iraq despite the fact that he knew that it was an occupiers' trial. His country is under occupation and the court was set up by Americans.

And was he lucid when you would speak with him?
Yes. In his mind he was clear and aware of everything. He believed that judgment on him had already been made before the trial started and that the trial itself was just a play.

Did he believe that if he were executed, the majority of Iraqis would see him as a martyr? Did he think that it would feed the insurgency?
First of all, you're using the wrong term. It is not an insurgency. We call it a resistance. Baathist, Islamic, whichever… It is a resistance.

Saddam's appearance and his political words gave courage to Arab nationalists around the world. It showed that this guy is not afraid of anything. He believed that his country should be liberated from the forces that are in it now. We all believe that—even me. Iraq is under occupation. We should not kid ourselves that we are free, that

America has left, or that there are free elections. This is not true. Iraq is an occupied state.

Why did you agree to represent Saddam when he was also clearly guilty of massive human rights violations? Were you defending Saddam the era or Saddam the accused?
I was contacted by his family and some colleagues, and I hesitated for about two or three months before accepting the job. I am known as a human rights activist, which, of course, doesn't logically fit with me defending Saddam. But after seeing the photos being published in Britain with him in his underwear, I saw that his dignity and humanity had been insulted. I felt that this man had to have a good lawyer. So I defended Saddam the prisoner, not Saddam the era. Saddam was imprisoned by an occupier and he had the full right to have me as a lawyer.

Was your life in danger because of your decision to defend Saddam?
Five of my colleagues died in very harsh, terrible ways. So as a defender of Saddam, I was also treated like a prisoner in Iraq. During the trial they took us from the plane at the airport straight into a helicopter. It was for our own security, but it was not freedom. We followed an American system and chain of command. There was no freedom as a lawyer to come and go and they constantly told me, "You risk being killed," and that they would not take responsibility.

Iraq is not really free and independent when lawyers must be flown in and out, then detained in a villa with 60 other lawyers inside using three bedrooms and two toilets. We got very frustrated. After one week we were all going mad.

Can we discuss the trial itself?
Saddam was defeated militarily but not constitutionally. If you throw him out in an act of war, he still has his status as president. He is absolutely protected as a war prisoner by the Geneva Convention, and Geneva is very clear about this. It explains the tools and the means of how you deal with a president, a war commander, his troops, and his weapons. But the laws of Geneva don't work for America, because if they used the normal laws Saddam would have been acquitted. So they thought, "What shall we do?" and they decided to make it up themselves. After spending millions of dollars, Mr. Paul Bremer [director of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance for postwar Iraq] came up with the idea of establishing a special court called the Central Criminal Court of Iraq.

Is that an unprecedented act?
Well, even Milosevic was given the full right to defend himself—the right to a fair trial. The difference is that his trial was under international criminal law. In Iraq, Bremer established what he called "Court Number 1." The Americans always say that we should abandon all special courts in the Third World—that there should be no military courts—but all that debate was thrown out by establishing this court. This special court was brought in by Americans and designed by Americans.

What do you have to say about the way the trial proceedings were conducted?
This was a trial of ethnicity, not an international trial. It should have been impartial and the co-defendants and co-accusers should have had the right and time to speak for themselves. My team should have been allowed to speak freely and openly, but every time we stood up the judges would say, "OK, OK, later, later you can talk." It didn't give us a good feeling or faith in the system.

I feel that if I'd had a proper, independent, impartial court, I could have received an acquittal and he would not have been sentenced to death. This guy should have been able to exercise his normal constitutional rights.

What was his mental health like before he died?
The last time I saw Saddam was in July, before the courts stopped us from meeting with him toward the end. He was normal—taking into account that he was taking medication because he had heart problems. He was not a young guy, keep in mind. Plus he had been detained for over three years without understanding why, and formerly he had been the president of a state for over 30 years. We asked him if he wanted to see anyone and he said, "I want to see my family and my daughter, but my family is not the problem. My problems are Iraq's problems. I am not a criminal being detained who needs to talk to his family."

Dr. Najeeb Al-Nuaimi. Photo by the author.

You Americans opened up a Pandora's box and you don't understand what will come out of it. It will be no feeling and no regret—just killing.

Was he allowed any indulgences inside the prison?
All he wanted—and received because of our pestering the judge—was a radio to listen to the BBC and Cohiba cigars.

What are your thoughts on the handling of Saddam's execution and the pro-Muqtada Al-Sadr chanting as he was hung?
It reflected and revealed two things: How much hate was inside the heart of the Mahdi Army, and the hatred and division that exists between the political parties of today's Iraq. It revealed that his whole trial was based on ethnic attitudes and showed that this was just a political trial—not a factual trial.

You have stated publicly that the trial was a sham. Was it even worth defending him?
Yes, it was. We always have to do something. To keep lying is dangerous. I can't stay blind when I know there is a miscarriage being carried out.

What do you think of Iraq without Saddam?
I think with the death of Saddam an era has been closed.

And what hopes do you have for Iraq now?
Well, there are a lot of predictions. There is talk of a huge massacre coming on the 12th of June—a massacre between Shia, Americans, everybody. It has nothing to do with Saddam anymore. Saddam is part of history now. You Americans opened up a Pandora's box and you don't understand what will come out of it. It will be no feeling and no regret—just killing.

You should write a book about your experience with Saddam's trial.
I am corresponding with an agent in the US. I still need an editor. If you read it I think you will cry.

Did Saddam ever express any regrets to you?
I once asked, him, "Why, Saddam? Why? Why invade Kuwait?" And he just shrugged his shoulders and said, "Everybody makes mistakes. I have made mistakes, but I think I did something for my country."

Did he have his cigars till the end?
Yes, he had his Cohibas until the end.

INTERVIEWED BY TANYA HABJOUQA

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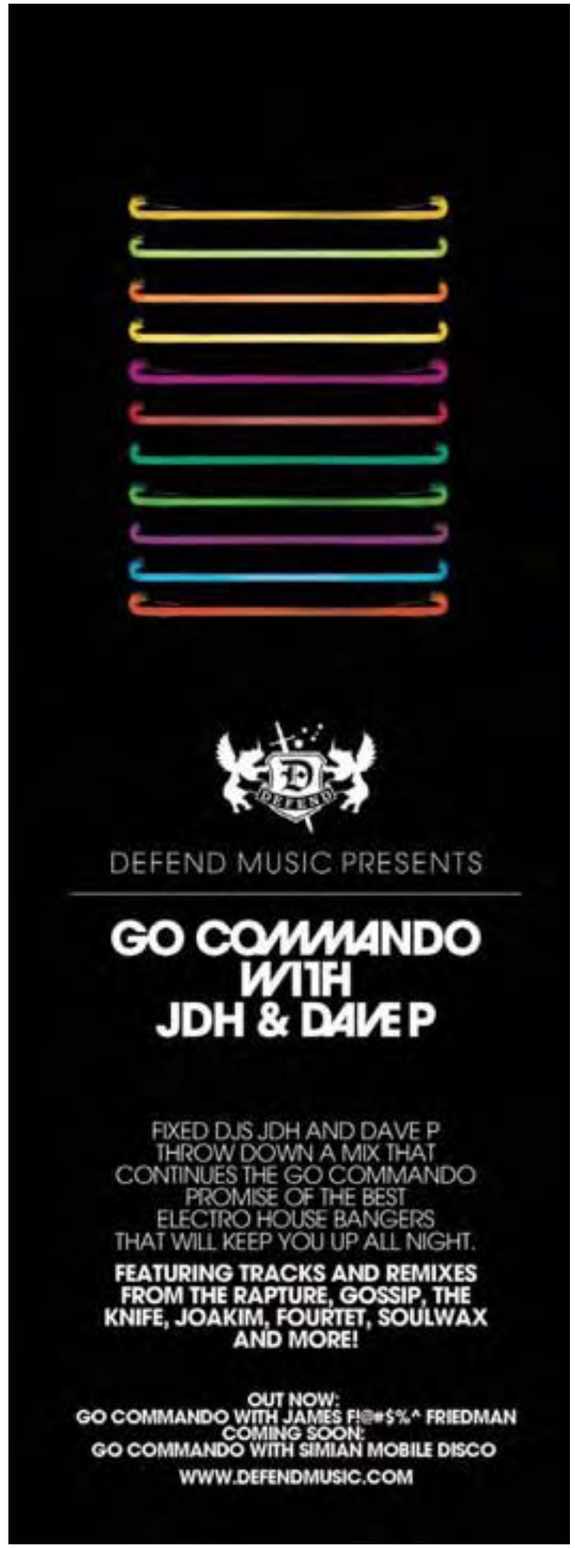
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How Was the Airport Battle Won?

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY HAYDER DAFFAR

The infamous battle of the Baghdad airport took place in the first week of April 2003. It was the final battle of the "official" conquest of Iraq. Even the Iraqi army admitted it was the deathblow. We call it the Battle of *al-Hawasim* ("the finals"). The same phrase, since then, is used to refer to any thug, thief, or criminal in the chaos of life after Saddam.

Our entire army was concentrated in the south of Baghdad waiting for the American troops to come on land. But the American 101st Division of air-transported vehicles landed at the airport west of Baghdad and surprised Saddam's army. The Iraqi response was to send the entire National Guard (the equivalent of the US Special Forces in training and skill) and all of Saddam's freedom fighters directly to the scene. Many Arab men also voluntarily joined up to meet a certain death.

Very few Iraqis survived the airport battle, which made it a myth on the tongues of the entire country. Rumors swirled around, mixed with stories from the few survivors, about the epic fight that took place at Saddam's international airport. But now even the earth cannot tell us the truth about what happened—the land was completely burned by mysterious American weapons. After the war, the American army brought many bulldozers filled with new soil to cover the evidence before the eyes of thousands of Iraqis and to bury the thousands of stories that took place on the famous airport road, aka the Highway of Death.

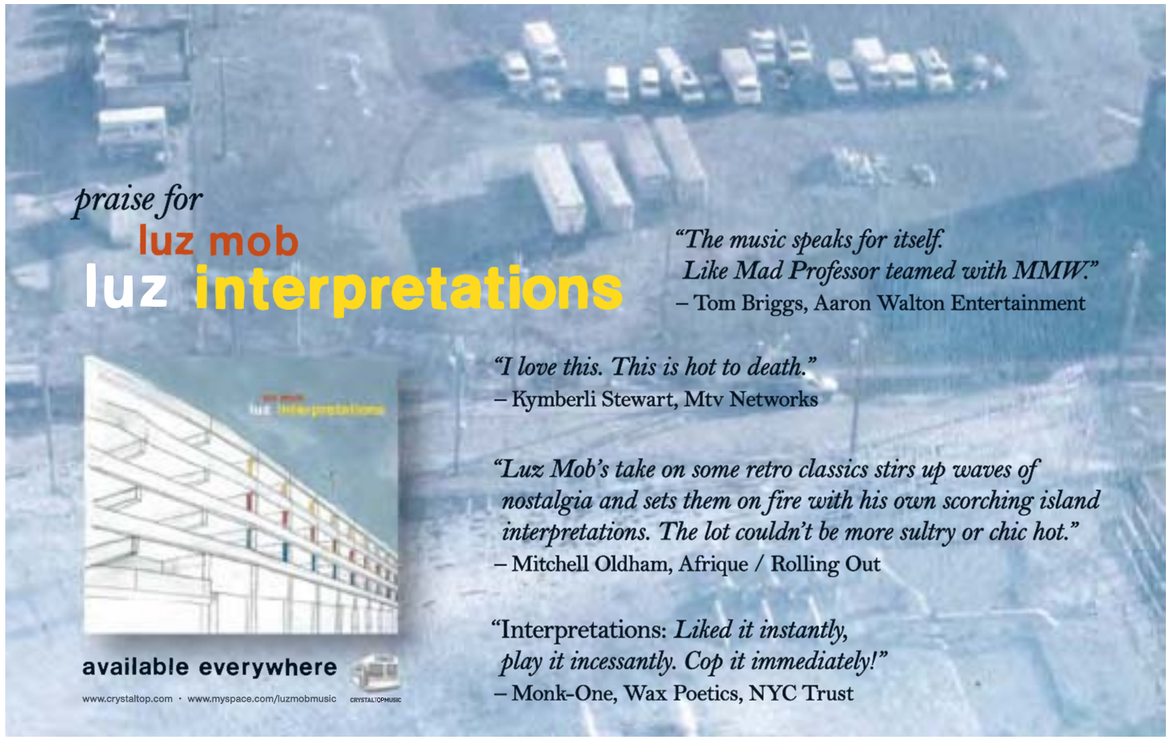
The most important things that survived are a few video CDs that I collected from friends and some photos that I took of the scattered bodies I found on the airport road. The CDs contained videos taken with small hand cameras by *Fedayeen Saddam* or Saddam's freedom fighters. These brutal special warriors were trained from the early stages of their lives to do two things: Obey and kill. I still remember how I used to watch these videos of their training on the Iraqi national channel on TV, before the war broke out. They were exiled to the desert in camps with no food or water for weeks, and the cameras monitored how they managed to survive by eating raw desert animals. I still remember seeing them butchering a wolf and eating it raw. The Fedayeen were the Iraqi stars of the airport battle. The movies they recorded show how they were unleashed by the hundreds to kill and butcher American soldiers at the beginning of the battle at the airport. There is this part of the video showing a group of them standing to take a photo together while each of them is holding the head of an American soldier. So if they were winning the battle, how and why did they all disappear?

Some people described it as a blue light; others just said that they saw an unbelievably strong glow that made them go blind for minutes afterward. The stories vary, but the truth is one. There were thousands of fierce Iraqi warriors with strong German and Russian artillery and tanks at that field, and they were all killed in one day. The stories that we received say that the Americans were horribly defeated in the first two days. Saddam's Fedayeen made small hills of American bodies spread around the field, burned some, ate the livers of some, and celebrated on their bodies. Then on the third day the American troops started to retreat, and the absentminded warriors who had no commanders above them (by that time the high commanders of the army, along with Saddam and all his gang, had managed to escape and disappear forever) thought that they won the battle. They moved further to take over the airport buildings, which were occupied by the marines. Soon after that, US aircraft came and bombed the hell out of everyone. No one could add any details to this part of the story because no one survived. But there were two important pieces of evidence on which I can guess that the American aircraft did use illegal weapons in that shelling.

One: I was a volunteer with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society. Our job during the war was to collect the bodies of Iraqis and bury them where they fell. Only two days after the Iraqi troops were defeated in the airport battle, we went to the airport road. Luckily, I had my camera with me. The bodies had not shed one drop of blood and they were wearing clean clothes, but they were all either completely charred, or nothing but a skeleton wearing a uniform. I hurriedly took as many pictures as I could and then we buried the bodies and left the place.

Two: After the war, I joined several other international activists doing research on 50 houses adjacent to the airport road. Each of the 50 houses had at least one resident who had started to suffer from skin disease, respiratory diseases, or other symptoms of cancer. We ordered a Geiger-Müller counter to measure the local radioactivity, and it indicated levels way higher than what a human being can take. Once the American Army started to change the soil of the airport road less than a week after the war was over, we became certain that some kind of radioactive bomb was used.

The truth about whatever happened in that battle died under the new soil of the airport road. All I have now to remember it are the pictures of those burned bodies and the videos of Saddam's fighters.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DOs

That thing about black farts being good luck may be true and it may be bullshit. Why not err on the side of caution however and capture at least one of them in your favorite t-shirt?

If girls want to be approachable they need to do better than "petulant teen," and go for more of a "coquettish three-year-old" thing.

Can we not hire a ringer to appear on *The White Rapper Show*? The ones they have now are making crackers look stupider than that "Why Must I Cry?" guy on YouTube.

All those evangelicals who think you can deprogram gays are fucking idiots, and to prove it I am going to try to "deprogram" my heterosexuality by giving this guy hand jobs for the rest of his life (watch, it won't work).

One of the reasons New Yorkers pay $100 a day to be here is the human messes that fill the bars and streets. It makes you feel like Bob Hoskins running around Toontown.

L.A. is so warm and easy and greasy you can almost smell the balls the second you get out of the airport.

It's fun going to fashion factories and seeing the machines that ideas come out of, but the other people on the tour can kind of make your eyes grumpy.

These guys in their gigantic-tea cozy hats over giganticer headphones listening to the Magnetic Fields and reading the City Pages exude a kind of "I'm me and that's that" matter-of-factness that just makes you want to walk by them and whisper, "I know, that's why I hate you."

This is the sequel to that 80s movie *Mannequin* only this time it's a window display from Ricky's that only comes to life when guidos give her bumps.

This town ain't big enough for the two of us fucking baby dickhead Scandinavian pussies.

You know what? If you're cute—go cute. Tattoos and facial scars look ridiculous on human figurines, so get your shit from a toy store and stand there until we tickle you within an inch of your life.

Wouldn't it be awesome if, instead of hiding it, your teacher went, "That's right kids. I munch on dinks like they're a box of Yodels©. Now let's move on and learn our black asses some fucking geography!"

We were at an intellectual dinner party discussing how impossible it is to be fierce in the winter when this girl came out of the bathroom and said, "Oh yeah?" and everyone was like, "Wha?" and she was all, "Check it" and we we're like, "No you did not!" and she's all, "What? Are you blind?" and we were all, "Oh shit!"

Well they may have missed the planes but it looks like Spiderman and his sidekick the Webmaster are finally back in Gotham and ready to kick some terrorist ass.

No matter how fucked-up you get, Chucks will always anchor the mayhem and make it look like you have your shit together. You could put a pair on Iraq right now and the whole world would be all, "Get 'er done, America!"

Leaving coke on your nose is the new leaving the price tag on your baseball hat.

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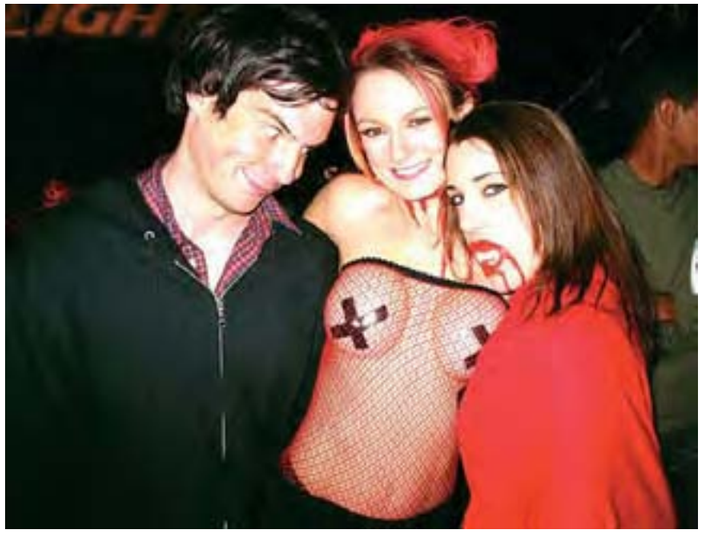
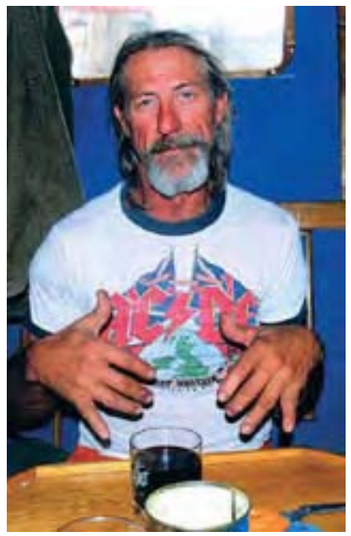


If you try to turn small tits into big tits you end up with big little tits, which is the same as those Canadian postcards that say, "Moosejaw's Provincial Bird," and have a huge cartoon mosquito.

This is fine at a Dickinson College football game, but when it's on your back in public you end up making your asshole look like a fucking asshole (like, literally, an asshole that's used for fucking).

If you're sure you've perfected invisible spray why not try it out at home with a friend first, especially when your body is a Frankenstein compilation of about 36 different bodies?

People who think riding their bicycle is saving the world and vocalists dressed in vintage-store garbage need to all move to an island somewhere where they can worship each other as much as they want. Oh wait, they did, it's called Williamsburg.



This guy has been into AC/DC so long he's on their seventh wave of irony.

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Apr 15 Aspen, CO - Belly Up
Apr 17 Boulder, CO - Fox Theatre
Apr 18 Menomonie, WI - Blue Devil Lounge
Apr 20 Madison, WI - High Noon Saloon
Apr 21 Chicago, IL - Subterranean
Apr 22 Bloomington, IN - Bluebird
Apr 23 St. Louis, MO - Washington University
Apr 24 Louisville, KY - Uncle Pleasants
Apr 25 Asbury Park, NJ - Asbury Lanes
Apr 26 Philadelphia, PA - Johnny Brenda's
Apr 27 New York, NY - Bowery Ballroom
Apr 28 Cleveland, OH - Grog Shop
Apr 29 Cleveland, OH - Grog Shop
May 01 Burlington, VT - Higher Ground Lounge
May 02 Boston, MA - Middle East
May 03 New York, NY - Knitting Factory
May 04 Philadelphia, PA - The Church
May 05 Baltimore, MD - Ottobar
May 08 Charlottesville, VA - Starr Hill
May 09 Carrboro, NC - Cats Cradle
May 10 TBA
May 11 TBA
May 11 Orlando, FL - The Social
May 12 Atlanta, GA - Drunken Unicorn
May 14 Birmingham, AL - The Nick
May 15 New Orleans, LA - Parish @ HOB
May 16 Houston, TX - Fitzgerald's
May 17 Albuquerque, NM - Launchpad
May 18 Tucson, AZ - Club Congress
May 19 Flagstaff, AZ - Orpheum
May 20 Pomona, CA - Glasshouse
May 22 San Diego, CA - Belly Up
May 23 Los Angeles, CA - Troubadour
May 24 San Luis Obispo, CA - Downtown Brew
May 25 San Francisco, CA - Slims
May 26 Reno, NV - New Oasis
May 28 Eugene, OR - Wow Hall
May 30 Portland, OR - Hawthorne Theatre
May 31 Seattle, WA - Vera Project
Jun 01 Bellingham, WA - Night Light
Jun 02 Missoula, MT - The Loft
Jun 04 Salt Lake City, UT - Urban Lounge
Jun 05 Denver, CO - Bluebird Theatre
Jun 16 Kansas City, KS - Record Bar
Jun 17 Des Moines, IA - Vaudeville Mews
Jun 08 Minneapolis, MN - First Avenue

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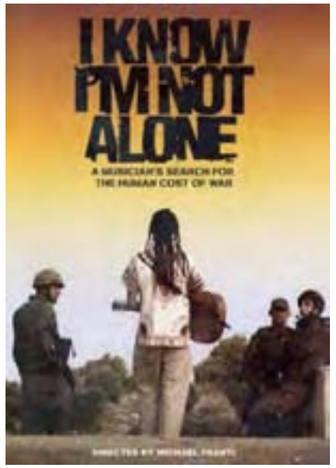
All reviews by Iraqi Konfused Kid



I Know I'm Not Alone: A Musician's Search for the Human Cost of War

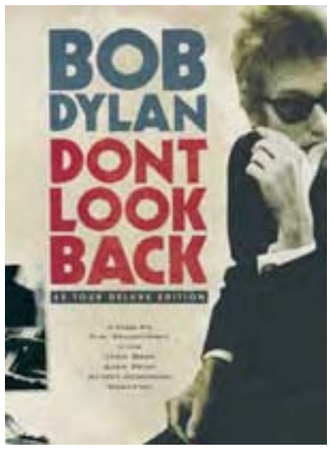
Epitaph/WEA

So here's Michael Franti, this huge, lanky kid with an acoustic guitar and breadlocks, and he goes inside a war-ravaged country to try and pry open "all the answers." Not surprisingly, he manages to completely miss the real pulse of Iraq, presenting his Iraqi subjects with the same patronizing concern you'd expect any kind-souled Westerner to feel towards any war-torn, lower-being Third World humans. It's almost shocking how out-of-touch Franti is with what's going on around him. He decides that making up a song with an Arabic word would be a good ice breaker, so he welcomes himself into each house he visits by jumping up and down in the center of the room singing "*habibi*" repeatedly while the family members sit back and smile politely at the dancing Western idiot. I'm not sure if this is exactly what he was searching for, but if the human cost of war is being locked in a round of humor-the-foreigner-until-he-goes-away by some messiah-tripping Bob-Marley-wannabee maybe it's more horrific than we thought.

Monsters and Madness

Criterion

Even back under Saddam, when we weren't allowed to have email, you could still find pretty much any Western movie you could ask for (porn excluded) for pennies on the dollar. I once took a cousin who was visiting from the States to a video market and he went nuts seeing what all was available. I don't recall seeing any of the four 50s horror/sci-fi flicks collected here, perhaps because they are four of the most forgettable films committed to celluloid. They're not even terrible enough to be funny—just average, average, average.



Don't Look Back (1965 Tour Deluxe Edition)

New Video Group

Basically no one in Iraq has ever heard of Bob Dylan. A lot of folks are into some Western stuff like Iron Maiden and Linkin Park, but Dylan never made it over here. The only way I found out about him was by being into Metallica and Nirvana, then using the internet to skip back and see what led to their styles of music. It was nice to see him at his prime—his whole carefree, pensive persona exudes nothing but charm. I have a hard time believing folks are still really into these tunes though—it's all so old- and antique sounding.

Beavis and Butt-head: The Mike Judge Collection

MTV

You'd think that idiocy would be universally appealing, but somehow American "adult cartoon" fare like this and *The Simpsons* doesn't translate well into the Arab world. Maybe it has something to do with all the Beavises and Homers running around our backyards with guns. Anyways, this collection was a treat, although spanning a ridiculous ten discs (including the 1996 movie) it's way too much stupid for a single or even a triple sitting. Also, for some reason most of the important couch-video-reviews are sadly gone.

7
8
9
Earthless
RYTHMS FROM A COSMIC SKY
"...loud-ass rock devastation, blown with drugged-out bass, pulsating rhythmic sex beats, and brain-piercing acid flash-back guitar leads." - Revolver
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FIELD MUSIC Tones Of Town
CD (Memphis Industries)
Brand new full-length from UK pop trio (Peter Brewis, David Brewis and Andrew Moore) who were the surprise hit of last year's SXSW festival
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Saturday March 17th
Field Music
Tokyo Police Club
The Pipettes
THE FINCHES Human Like A House
CD (Dulc-i-tone)
Beloved SF folk-pop duo's debut full-length
"An enchanting, rewarding and uplifting album."
– Everett True, Plan B
SXSW SHOWCASE:
Friday March 16th
@ The Whiskey Bar
THE MORE SHALLOWS Book Of Bad Breaks
CD/LP (anticon)
Full-length follow-up to 2005's well-loved More Deep Cuts
ANTICON SXSW SHOWCASE:
Thursday March 15th @ Spiro's Patio
Spiro's Patio (611 Red River Road and 6th Street)
1am - Sole – 12am - Dosh - 11pm - Buck 65
10pm - Thee More Shallows - 9pm - Fog
8pm - Telephone Jim Jesus
INNOCENCE MISSION We Walked In Song
CD/LP (Badman)
"These folks create absolutely beautiful intricately crafted soft pop that will surely stand the test of time. Although released very early in the year, We Walked In Song will easily end up being one of the best releases of 2007. Highly recommended." – babysue.com
DEMONS CLAWS Satan's Little Pet Pig
CD/LP (In The Red)
The latest sensation from the garage-rock mecca that is modern day Montreal, Canada. Championed by label-mates The Black Lips who know their rock'n'roll better than most
EATS TAPES Dos Mutantes
CD (Tigerbeat6)
New sounds from the San Francisco, CA Nintendo-rock underground. Dos Mutantes features ten new spazzy techno bangers, radioactive, wrap-around artwork by Mat Brinkman and a bonus video for the track "Tenderizer"
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Assraelis: Israeli Erotica

Tightfithd.com
Dir: Ilay Kimchi
Rating: 10

I'm a big fan of war. What can I say? I'm an asshole. I'm not so big on all the blood and guts and our boys dying over there but I do enjoy the comedic aspect of saying, "We're at war!" or better yet, "This means war!" More than that I like to lie about war. That's a lie. I like to lie about everything when it results in laughs but war-lies have an especially big place in my heart. My go-to is telling people that my father was killed in the bombing of Pearl Harbor to test their math and knowledge of history. Generally people are very stupid and offer me their condolences and say what a terrible war that was. And they're right—the Big One, WWII, was an awful tragedy and yet it's my favorite war of all time. I guess if you have to love just one war you might as well make it the biggest and baddest one ever. When it comes to lies of personal experience though, I tend to lean toward Vietnam. Because of the hit television show *M*A*S*H* I'm certainly more knowledgeable about the Korean War, but "Vietnam" is a funnier sounding word and it makes me happy every time I yell it. A buddy of mine is a Vietnamese pro skater and years back I changed his name to "VIETNAM!" and have not uttered his real name since. When people are rude to me and my wife turns and says, "What a bitch. I can't believe how she just treated you," I say, "Baby, that's nothing compared to the way our country turned its back on me after spending 16 months in a Korean prison camp in Vietnam. Or how they discarded every one of our boys that came home in a body bag." She generally just ignores me. My lie for whiners who piss and moan in my ear about having a rough day at work or not being able to smoke in bars anymore is "You want troubles? Try being pinned down in the bush for 72 hours by Charlie. They were everywhere: The trees, the grass—Christ! It felt like they had wings and were up in the sky above us. We couldn't fart or shit, we had nothing to eat but dirt and we fucking liked it. I remember Bobbo couldn't take the pressure and lit a cigarette. Charlie zoomed in on the cherry of his smoke and took his whole head off. ONE OF HIS EARS LANDED IN MY MOUTH! We had his brains all over us until they sent in the cavalry to save our asses. So I don't want to hear shit about you having to stand up and go outside to enjoy the freedom that I won for you. YOU WEREN'T THERE!" Recently, I was contacted by a sergeant in our brave army who is stationed over in Iraq. He said that my writing made him and his troops laugh—that for a brief stint on the toilet they forgot about where they were. It made me feel good. I felt as if in some small, insignificant way I was doing my part against the War on Terror. Then I took it a step further and responded, "Sergeant, thank you for your kind words. If it's OK with you, I'm going to go ahead and lie to people, since my words are doing their duty in Iraq, and say that I too am currently serving in Iraq (by proxy). If you wouldn't mind emailing me from time to time to let me know how I am doing over there and how many confirmed kills I've got I'd appreciate that." That was two months ago—I've yet to hear back from him. I hope we didn't die over there. I've got a wife back home…

CHRIS NIERATKO

For more Chris go to Chrisnieratko.com or Njskateshop.com

BEST ALBUM OF THE MONTH: JUKEBOX BUDDHA

RAP

J DILLA
Ruff Draft
Stones Throw

This is rap, so it might be all about murder and being poor in the black ghetto, but honestly these rhythms make me really happy. On the scale of climbing up a tree in a forest really fast, jumping up and down constantly, and flying, I put these beats at a solid jumping up and down constantly. Still not sure what the words are though.
HAYDER DAFFAR

RJD2
The Third Hand
XL Recordings

WTF? I'm not sure what to make of this album, and RJD2 himself apparently suffers from the same terrible predicament. Pop tunes, rock-ish melodies, the expected hip-hop, even some really retro synth sounds. Oh, and did i mention RJD2 sings throughout this one? Dude, stick to what you know best. And get some singing lessons. RJD2, FOR SHAME!
OMAR FADHIL

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Stones Throw: Ten Years
Stones Throw

I like this compilation. There's one track that's really good with this conversation between a man and a woman. It's like universal things, they're using words that anybody can figure out. Good times.
HAYDER DAFFAR

RZA
Afro Samurai
Koch

I don't usually like hip-hop, I haven't listened to previous albums by the RZA or the Tang Clan so I don't have a really good basis of comparison but I'm loving this one. The music's very rich and the lyrics have purpose. It's just that the purpose is communicating to you a story about black samurais or some such.
FARIS ATTIA

THE PACK
Skateboards 2 Scrapers
Jive

This is good rap. I like when kids use crazy words like "crunk" and "out the do' ."
HAYDER'S LADY

SEAN PRICE
Jesus Price Superstar
Duck Down

I like this. It is so sexy. It is so GOOD when you fuck your gal and you have this.
GAYDAR HEFFAR

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Hyphy Hitz
TVT

Oh man, I like all these songs. It's true "I'm fuuuuucked" music, you know? Made for bugging out for poor people on the streets. I think it's the fact that black people, they have a really special mood for listening. They always sing their songs with feeling. And dancing. This isn't even really my style, but I like it.
RAFFAD REDYAH

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Chrome Children
Stones Throw

I'm hard on all the raps, but this one I think is really special. It's a bunch of different folks, but this one woman when she comes in and is screaming… I'm already crazy tonight, but this made me really go mad.
HAYDER DAFFAR

HARD STUFF

UNSANE
Visqueen
Ipecac

I don't know whether they did this on purpose or not, but the sound quality of a couple songs is very poor even though I'm using a Harman/Kardon stereo! I'd say there are a few songs that I'd listen to when I'm drunk and driving at 100 mph, and I can't deny there is some good guitar playing. Still, all in all, this album isn't worth it.
OMAR FADHIL

DAS OATH
Mini LP
Dim Mak

This band is frustrated, listening to them makes me even more frustrated. Ever heard that some music can promote the health of plants and that other

WORST ALBUM OF THE MONTH: TYPE O NEGATIVE

kinds of music have the opposite effect? All I've got to say to these guys and their fans is enjoy your houses full of dead ferns.
FARIS ATTIA

OTEP
Ascension
Capitol

My humble advice for these men is to stop—chill out for a bit with everyone yelling different things at the same time and stop making this crap. If I wanted to listen to chaos I would have just stuck around in Baghdad, you know? There's no reason they couldn't all take turns yelling crap. Or even just have one guy yelling crap—now there's a thought.
HAYDER DAFFAR

ALABAMA THUNDER-PUSSY
Open Fire
Relapse

This kind of metal makes a very good mood for parties, for people dancing. I'm not much of a dancer, but I can dance with waving or with my feet. For example, I can make one dance and then bang you—while dancing. As an added bonus, a lot of the songs have two intervals: One for dancing, and one for relaxing and thinking—thinking about all the dancing and banging of days and songs gone by.
HAYDER DAFFER

BIG BUSINESS
Here Come the Waterworks
Hydrahead

Big Business, Aural Attack! This is every bit as powerful and sludgy as their first album, if just a little more refined—that is if you dare call this kind of dirty, dirty sound refined. Dare you?! The only way to appreciate this album is with the volume cranked all the way up, and then some. If you are a fan of Big Business, REJOICE! If you're not, this will make you one, and then: REJOICE!
ABDULLAH D

LORDI
The Arokalypse
Sony

I don't know what was going on with the first part—it's fucking weird, just like a conversation between two guys, but then when the music comes in, I feel like I'm sitting in a helicopter and have military orders to hit someone, like a battlefield. LordiiiiIIIIIII!!!
HAYDER DAFFAR

LESBIAN
Power Hor
Holy Mountain

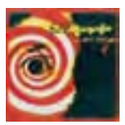
Boring, extremely boring. They could reduce each piece to 1/4 the length and no one would sense a difference. If you want to convince people to listen to tracks that are a half-hour long each, give them something they can actually chew on.
OMAR FADHIL

STRIBORG
Nefaria/A Tragic Journey toward the Light
Displeased

If you're tired of excessively complex black metal records that pack 50 riffs per minute, you might find a subtle refreshment in the unchanging mud that you have to swim through here. That said, this is not a music album, it's more like an experiment of annoying as many people as possible—vocals, guitars and keyboards are all submerged way deep inside a lake of frozen fuzz. Occasional riffs try to take place inside, but they're mere bubbles on the surface of this cauldron of unabashed filth. If this was a Radiohead album, you could probably create a cult dedicated to basing theories about, say, what that sound at 4:37 meant.
IRAQI KONFUSED KID

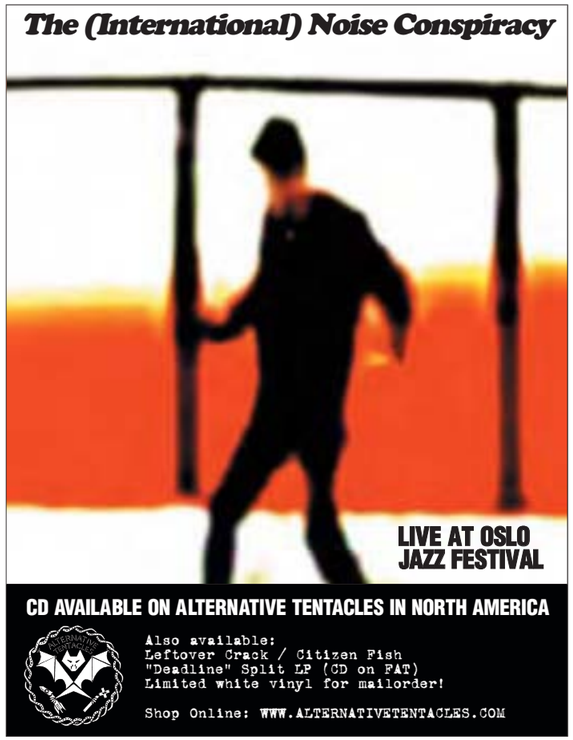
THE FALL
Reformation: Post TLC
Narnack

Ach, I was looking forward to this because it starts out with this sort of wicked-sounding devil laugh, but then immediately after it's just like, boredom. Like being hit with the culmination of all boredom at once. It would not surprise me to learn that the Fall made this music with the specific purpose of boring the fucking shit out of me and that its working title was *Let's Rob Nasser of His Will to Live, Vol. 1.*
NASSER AL-HAROUN



FU MANCHU
We Must Obey
Century Media

A very good offering from Fu Manchu. Not their absolute best, but damn near close. you'll find solid thumping rhythms, tight drum patterns, and blistering leads throughout the tracks, which are consistent and well written. Thing is, at times it sounds too raw for its own good. the production values on this thing should have been a little bit higher, I tell you, these guys could easily decimate all if they just cleaned up their act a little. And I mean ALL. Let's get it together Fu boys!
ABDULLAH D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BEST COVER OF THE MONTH: OMAR SOULEYMAN

TYPE O NEGATIVE
Dead Again
Steamhammer

What the fuck!? This style is like battlefield sounds: Soldiers and guns, *pumpumpumpumpumpumpum*. I'm a fucking Iraqi, I don't want to sit around listening to bombings and shootings. If I did, I would turn the stereo *off*. For nine years I have heard nothing but people shooting each other. You might think I can only speak for myself, but I just put this on for company I have over and my two Iraqi friends both agree. My Syrian friend on the other hand, just said, "I'm not understand."
HAYDER DAFFAR

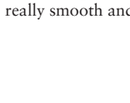
TRAP THEM
Sleepwell Deconstructor
Sound and Culture

I expect this band has to be in a good mood to make this kind of music. Listening to it, it's only about myself… or maybe yourself, you know? Sometimes you are relaxed and sometimes you are angry. This band is good for angry. If you are angry, please hear this band.
DARFUR HATER

!!!
Myth Takes
Warp

If they're trying to say something to other people, it's Mission Failed: Game Over. I'm not talking about language, I'm talking about feelings. The guys in this band could stay up thinking until morning of things to say, but it still wouldn't make any sense to other people. Do you know that song "California Hotel" by the Eagles? It's so famous. Those guys are just singing about some fucking hotel and still, it made a connection with people.
HAYDER DAFFAR

SOFT STUFF



ALBERT HAMMOND JR.
Yours to Keep

I have nothing to say about this. I'm not sure if I even like it or not. I asked myself when I was listening, "What's happening? Do you like this or not?" and I responded, "I'm sorry, I really don't know. Will you just chill out and give me a second? Seriously, I'm trying to figure it out." If I had some radio here I feel like I could just make the sounds up on my own, but I don't know what to think of it coming from someone else.
GAYDAR LAFFE

IDLEWILD
Make Another World
Sanctuary

It's the kind of stuff that grows on you from the first time. I already rank some tracks among my favorites. You know, spring is just about to arrive here in Baghdad and the smooth energy of this music perfectly fits my definition of "spring melody."
OMAR FADHIL

AMNESTY
Free Your Mind
Now-Again

I like this. It sounds like some sort of forgotten R&B from the 1970s. It's really smooth and sad, and all Iraqis love sad music. Maybe not all—but me at least, I really like sad music. I think that's reality for feelings, you know? Not fake, like forever smiling. Anyways, I feel this, that is what I'm telling you.
HAYDER DAFFAR

THE VIEW
Hats Off to the Buskers
1965

Ugh, shit on this. What is going on with this guy's voice? "*Eeeeeoooeeeeeooo*." It sometimes sounds like I'm listening to a woman, but then keeps going back. This kind of sex-change crap might appeal to you immoral 'ulooj, but this doesn't make touch with my feelings any more than I'd want his dick to make touch with my asshole.
HAYDER DAFFAR

CALVIN JOHNSON AND THE SONS OF THE SOIL
s/t
K

If you ride in a car, you need this kind of music. I feel like I could sit in a car for a long way, but the trip would not be a boring trip. Some time ago me and my friend were driving from New York to Austin, Texas, and we had a lot of music like this. Three days of only driving, though if I had these guys, maybe we could have made it in two? He's got a cool voice.
HAYDER DAFFAR

BEAR COLONY
s/t
Esperanza Plantation

These are some sweet tunes. I could easily see myself with a nice woman,

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WORST COVER OF THE MONTH: A DATE WITH JOHN WATERS

walking between the trees around some kind of forest or something. Good feelings—therefore I like it.
HAYDER DAFFAR

TED LEO AND THE PHARMACISTS
Living With the Living
Touch and Go

This music's really hard to deal with. I mean, it's so heavy above my soul to hear this music and try to sort out what its whole meaning is. I'm sure it is supposed to mean something to different people, but to me it's like, I can't use it to imagine something or go somewhere else in my mind. It creates nothing new for me. I can't say I really like it or dislike it… just… I don't know, fuck off.
HAYDERADE

LOVE OF DIAGRAMS
Love of Diagrams EP
Unstable Ape

I don't know what to make of this shit. It's weird and there's a girl singing. Ummm, yeah, so no comment I guess.
HEY DERE, FARAHKCHI

AIR
Pocket Symphony
Astralwerks

I'm sorry, the package with the CDs finally got here yesterday morning, but I did not get the pick-up call from FedEx until afternoon curfew had started and today there was shooting on a street close to mine so I haven't been able to leave the house. I'll try again tomorrow, but maybe you could just describe the music to me and I could guess how it would make me feel?
GHAZI STRIPS

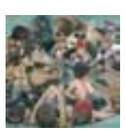
WEIRD STUFF

COCOROSIE
The Adventures of Ghosthorse and Stillborn
Touch and Go

What the hell? Cradle songs is the last music I want to listen to. I dabble in soft stuff from time to time but I literally fell asleep by the second track with this one! There should be some sort of warning about playing this on your car stereo on the front, or at least an advertisement for insomniacs.
OMAR FADHIL

OMAR SOULEYMAN
Highway To Hassake: Folk and Pop Sounds of Syria
Sublime Frequencies

This is the kind of album people would play on a raucous desert trip, blasting across the sands. Arabic music in general is an acquired taste because of its use of quarter-tones, those weird bendy-sounding notes that instantly set Western teeth on edge. If you've been itching to know what kind of tunes Arab kids jam out to when they make party, this will do it for you, but don't think for a second it's going to bend to your Western ear.
FARIS ATTIA



PANDA BEAR
Person Pitch
Paw Tracks

The singing-from-the-other-end-of-the-toilet-drain voice effect is fun to hear on one track of an album, but when the whole album uses it you start thinking of what's at the other end of the toilet drain. Sounds like a Beach Boys/Beatles experimental gone wrong.
FARIS ATTIA

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Jukebox Buddha
Staubgold

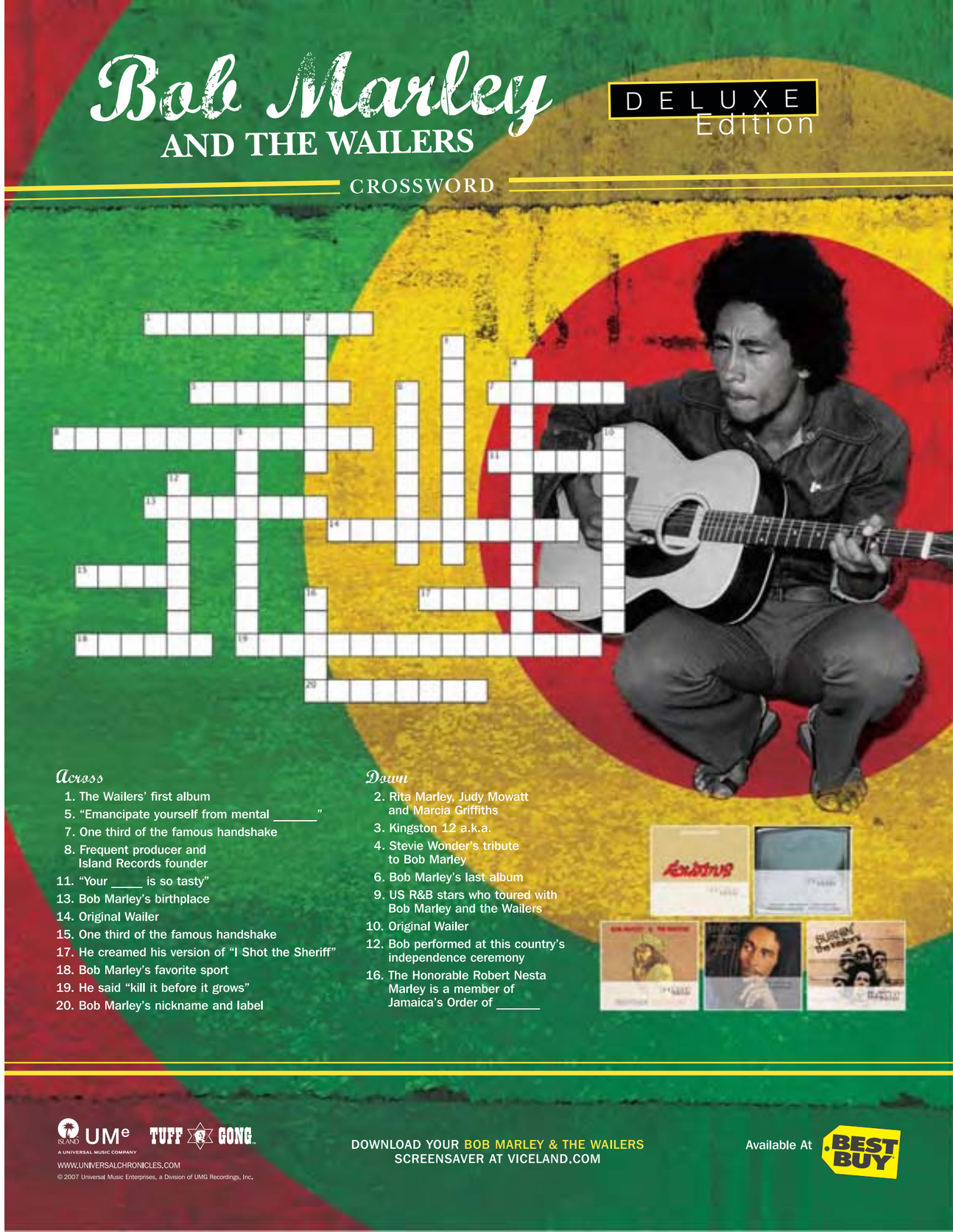
Finding inner peace can sometimes be a little hard in the middle of persistent machine-gun fire and mortars, but this guy definitely helps. *Jukebox Buddha* is a great compilation album with which to unwind or play gently in the background during a "session." I don't know if it helps or hurts that I have no idea who any of these guys are.
FARIS ATTIA

VARIOUS ARTISTS
A Date With John Waters
New Line

Apparently this is a bunch of old, weird songs that John Waters, the famous filmmaker and gay, would play for you on a date to get you in the mood for some good old-fashioned man-loving. That's all well and good if it's what you're into (although it would get your throat slit around my area), but I'm a little confused/worried about why "Johnny, Are You Queer" comes so late in the mix. Wouldn't he want to clear that up right off the bat?
SADDAMITE

AIDS WOLF VS. ATHLETIC AUTOMATON
Clash of the Life-Force Warriors
Skingraft

OK, this stuff doesn't even make sense. Do you want to hear some music? Here: [*plays first two verses of Afroman's "Because I Got High"*]. You see? The nice drums, the bass? That's what you should be sending us. *That's* what we are wanting to hear.
HAYDER DAFFAR


Bob Marley
AND THE WAILERS
DELUXE Edition
CROSSWORD
Across
1. The Wailers' first album
5. "Emancipate yourself from mental _____"
7. One third of the famous handshake
8. Frequent producer and Island Records founder
11. "Your ____ is so tasty"
13. Bob Marley's birthplace
14. Original Wailer
15. One third of the famous handshake
17. He creamed his version of "I Shot the Sheriff"
18. Bob Marley's favorite sport
19. He said "kill it before it grows"
20. Bob Marley's nickname and label
Down
2. Rita Marley, Judy Mowatt and Marcia Griffiths
3. Kingston 12 a.k.a.
4. Stevie Wonder's tribute to Bob Marley
6. Bob Marley's last album
9. US R&B stars who toured with Bob Marley and the Wailers
10. Original Wailer
12. Bob performed at this country's independence ceremony
16. The Honorable Robert Nesta Marley is a member of Jamaica's Order of _____
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TUFF GONG
WWW.UNIVERSALCHRONICLES.COM
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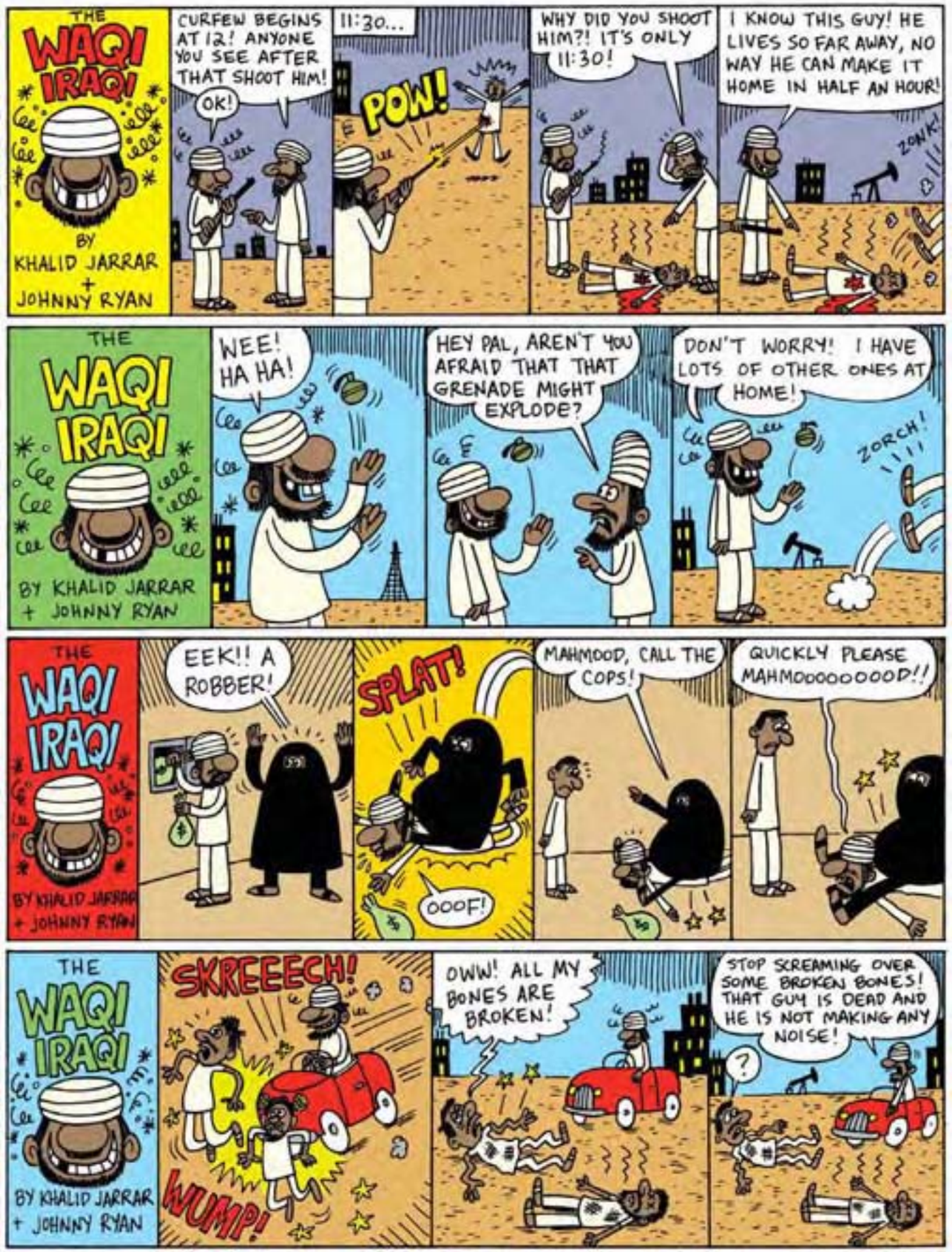
THE WAQI IRAQI
BY KHALID JARRAR + JOHNNY RYAN
CURFEW BEGINS AT 12! ANYONE YOU SEE AFTER THAT SHOOT HIM!
OK!
11:30...
POW!
WHY DID YOU SHOOT HIM?! IT'S ONLY 11:30!
I KNOW THIS GUY! HE LIVES SO FAR AWAY, NO WAY HE CAN MAKE IT HOME IN HALF AN HOUR!
ZONK!
THE WAQI IRAQI
BY KHALID JARRAR + JOHNNY RYAN
WEE! HA HA!
HEY PAL, AREN'T YOU AFRAID THAT THAT GRENADE MIGHT EXPLODE?
DON'T WORRY! I HAVE LOTS OF OTHER ONES AT HOME!
ZORCH!
THE WAQI IRAQI
BY KHALID JARRAR + JOHNNY RYAN
EEK!! A ROBBER!
SPLAT!
OOOF!
MAHMOOD, CALL THE COPS!
QUICKLY PLEASE MAHMOOOOOOOD!!
THE WAQI IRAQI
BY KHALID JARRAR + JOHNNY RYAN
SKREEECH!
WUMP!
OWW! ALL MY BONES ARE BROKEN!
STOP SCREAMING OVER SOME BROKEN BONES! THAT GUY IS DEAD AND HE IS NOT MAKING ANY NOISE!
?

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